



Christian  
Reformed  
Church

# Prospective Candidates 2023





May 23, 2023

Dear Delegates of Synod 2023,

Enclosed in this booklet are descriptions of the candidates being recommended to Synod 2023. For each person there is a photo, a brief biographical sketch, a statement of their faith journey, and the stated reason for pursuing candidacy. Each of the candidates has their own unique story and their own unique gifts. They are united in a desire to serve the Lord Jesus Christ through ordained ministry in the Christian Reformed Church. We trust that these pages (presented via an electronic format) will help the delegates of Synod 2023 become a bit more familiar with the 30 candidates.

The Candidacy Committee expresses its gratitude to the faculty and administration of Calvin Seminary for their role in preparing the candidates for this significant event in their respective ministry journeys. Many of the candidates have spent several years in study at Calvin Seminary through either the residential or distance programs. Those who have graduated from other seminaries have participated in the EPMC (Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy), a program approved by synod, overseen by the Candidacy Committee, and carried out in partnership with Calvin Seminary.

As a Candidacy Committee we are pleased to present these individuals to the church. We rejoice in what God has done and will do through each of them. We invite each delegate of synod to use this electronic booklet as a prompter to pray for the church and for the candidates as they wait for and respond to calls from the church in the coming months.

The Candidacy Committee

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*Name:* Tomas Axeland

*Current Place of Residence:* Maple Ridge,  
British Columbia, Canada

*Education:*

Fäckelbarrarnas Bible School  
Holsby Brunn, Sweden  
2004-2005

Columbia Bible College  
Abbotsford, British Columbia  
Bachelor of Arts in Biblical  
Studies, 2005-2010

Regent College  
Vancouver, British Columbia  
Master of Arts in Church History,  
2010-2014

Calvin Theological Seminary  
Grand Rapids, MI  
EPMC, MDiv equivalency,  
2021- 2023

*Internships/ Experience:*

Maple Ridge Christian School  
Abbotsford, British Columbia  
Internship, 2007-2009

Prince George CRC  
Prince George, British Columbia  
Interim Pastor, 2021

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### *Faith Journey*

Though I grew up in a Christian home, it was a somewhat broken home. My parents were divorced when I was two and my mother quickly remarried. My biological father had trained to be a minister, but upon leaving small town Sweden to the big city of Vancouver with my mom, had fallen into sin and left my mother. My Mom was very attracted to the more charismatic kind of Christianity, and I grew up in a church where services were filled with dancing, 'speaking in tongues', and people believing they were receiving prophetic visions.

Although I was always interested in religious things, and would preach to my non-believing friends and bring them to church eagerly, I became disillusioned with charismatic worship very early. At 12 my parents decided to put me in Christian day school and here I met friends from the CRC. The Reformed church suited me better and was a conveniently short walk from my parent's church on Sunday mornings. I would attend this church, both Sunday morning and the youth group, throughout high school. My wife was baptized in this church, my wife and I were married there, my two daughters were baptized there, and we still attend.

Since high school I have been a skateboarder. The sport appealed to my creative nature. At the same time, it also fed my rebellious side. While I never got into too much trouble, as a youth and young adult I probably pushed the boundaries a little more than I ought to have. In my faith this was seen in the way that I was unable to fully accept the church as my guide. I studied theology in my early twenties like an outsider to the faith, prodding it and questioning everything. These days we might call it 'deconstructing'.

While attending Columbia Bible College I was married to Heather. Getting married young (21) helped me to focus on my studies as now there was more than simply me that I had to account for. My wife is also much more sensitive to interpersonal relationships, and helped me become more sensitive to how my words effected those I was speaking to. The fifteen years of our marriage have shaped me and my faith more than anything else.

It was at Regent College that the 'reconstruction' of my faith began. I began to feel secure in the faith as I saw the sincere and mature faith of my professors. Under the supervision of professors that I really respected I began to see how trusting in the supervision of the church and her tradition made faith much more vibrant than simply prodding from the outside. I realized that the rightful questioning of the charismatic church I grew up in had given me a disposition of questioning everything rather than being faithful to what has been handed down. At Regent I learned what it meant to study theology in service to the church, rather than service to my ego, and out of this my faith grew.

As my faith grew I was able to use my skateboarding to minister to my fellow skaters. Through Skate Life I had an outlet to be more intentional in how I related to my fellow skaters and was given a glimpse into ministry. While I loved getting to know the kids, serving them by bringing them to different skateparks and putting on annual camps, I was frustrated by my inability to foster spiritual growth. I really sensed the importance of the church in this ministry, and felt called to ministry in the church where I could participate in the means of grace to disciple others.

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*Faith Journey (continued)*

After Regent I was not sure where I ought to go. I had always planned to pursue academic theology and pursue a PhD. My decision was to wait to decide and start a construction company, and have some children. While I did this, and continued to serve in Skate Life, I began speaking to my pastor about discerning a call to ministry. I love teaching and preaching, and in my years after Regent would lead book clubs and adult bible studies in our church. Through our conversations, and conversations with my wife and other friends, it became clear that I ought to pursue ordained ministry.

I have felt confirmed in this call since I began preparations for ordination. I most felt confirmed in this call when I had the opportunity to serve in an interim position as a solo pastor at Prince George CRC. It is a small church in northern British Columbia, and it was an excellent place to get a taste of ministry. While I knew I would love everything around preaching and teaching, I did not expect how much I would love visiting with people and getting to know the congregation. It is in this aspect that I felt the call to ministry most firmly. My desire is to love God's people as much as he does, and serve them out of that love, presenting them mature in Christ.

Tomas Axeland

*Statement of Reason*

I wish to pursue ordained ministry in the Christian Reformed Church in response to the call of God on my life to use the gifts he has given me to serve his church. I feel that I can most effectively do this through ordained ministry. I take the title, 'minister of the Word' very seriously, and understand that all my authority as a minister comes through bringing God's word to his people. Whether it be preaching or pastoral visitation, I see it as my duty to bring God's word to his people and bring the message of love and healing he offers in his gospel. I love the Reformed tradition, both the theology of the catechisms and the way the we worship God with reverence and awe. I am very excited to see how God will build his church in the future.

Tomas Axeland



*Name:* Rebecca J.A. Bokma

*Current Place of Residence:* Kitchener,  
Ontario, Canada

*Education:*

Redeemer University  
Ancaster, ON  
Bachelor of Arts, 2019

Calvin Theological Seminary  
Grand Rapids, MI  
M.Div., December 2023

*Internships/ Experience:*

Meadowlands Fellowship CRC  
Ancaster, ON  
Pastoral Intern  
June 2021 - August 2021

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*Faith Journey*

I remember being as young as ten years old, carefully writing down the Hebrew and Greek words that appeared on our pastor's slides during his sermon. I tried to take detailed notes so that I could ask questions after the service, making sure that I had the translations written down correctly. There was something I instantly connected to with another one of my pastors in high school. It seemed logical to ask her to be my mentor as I began university, even if I didn't really know what "mentoring" was.

I didn't realize it at the time, but I was seeing myself reflected in the ministers in my life. A deep interest in the history and translations of the Bible, a deep love for connecting with youth and young adults who are trying to make sense of the church.

I grew up in a Christian home and attended Christian school from kindergarten all the way through my undergraduate degree. Some people may read that and say that I am sheltered, that I never had a chance for my faith to be tested. Yet, despite my strong Christian upbringing, I have faced my share of questions and wonderings as I have travelled on this journey of faith.

There was no reason for me not to be a Christian, yet there was every reason to give my life to Christ. I recall a quiet night in bed having a serious conversation with God and declaring my desire to follow Christ.

As for my call to ministry, it was truly a moment of call that seemed to make sense of everything in my life leading up to that point. I was attending Redeemer University for my undergraduate degree and I was walking through the commons when I passed by a recruitment table for Calvin Theological Seminary. Up to this point, I was not planning on further education, but instead, as I walked by the CTS table, I heard the voice of God clearly telling me that that was where I was going next.

I called one of my pastors and said, "I think I'm going to Seminary." He responded simply "yes, you are." What followed was long talks with mentors, pastors, and professors to make sense of what happened. From those who knew me best I received nothing but affirmation. For the first time in my life, through the entire application process, I had no worries. If this calling was ordained by God, God would guide me through. If it wasn't, I was sure God would let me know.

Being in Seminary I found a love for sermon writing and preaching. At the beginning I wondered why God would let me spend so much time on a completely different degree if I was never going to pursue that as a career. As a response God has shown me time and time again how my education, my hobbies, and all of my interests have led to a calling to his people, the Church.

Rebecca J.A. Bokma

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*Statement of Reason*

I am seeking candidacy for ordination in the Christian Reformed Church to continue my calling to minister to all of God's children. Though I am called to ministry, I know I will fall short. It is only through the power of the Holy Spirit, the grace of God, and salvation through Jesus Christ that I can hope to fulfill this calling. I will be honest with all people that I meet about the church and faith. I will strive to be a role model of honest faith, passing on the support that I have received from the church. Even though I may face times when I am discouraged, I will lead worship and teach with the power of the Holy Spirit, through the grace of God.

Rebecca J.A. Bokma





*Name:* Joshua T. Carpenter

*Current Place of Residence:* Merrillville,  
Indiana, USA

*Education:*

Kuyper College  
Grand Rapids, MI  
B.S., Pre-Seminary & Theology,  
2019

Mid-America Reformed Seminary  
Dyer, IN  
M.Div., 2023

Calvin Theological Seminary  
Grand Rapids, MI  
EPMC, 2023

*Internships/ Experience:*

Grace Church, PCA  
Lansing, IL  
May 2021 - August 2021

Borculo CRC  
Zeeland, MI  
June 2022 - August 2022

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*Faith Journey*

I was born and raised in the Christian Reformed Church in North America. I grew up at Second CRC in Kalamzoo, MI, and attended Kalamzoo Christian Elementary School through fifth grade and then Heritage Christian Academy from sixth grade through graduating high school. During a Bible lesson in sixth grade, a number of my fellow classmates retold their coming to faith and surrendering their life to the Lord. While I have grown up in the Church, I realized then that I had not submitted my life to the Lord, and so, in the middle of class I surrendered my life to Christ. Eventually, I made profession of faith on July 15, 2012, at Second CRC.

Since about the fifth grade I had wanted to become a pastor, and during my Senior year of high school I received my call to ministry. During my Junior year of high school, our senior pastor retired and so we were vacant for a while. Over the course of that time searching, we had a number of pastors filling pulpits for us, and during one of their sermons they gave a statistic of the lack of pastors to churches in North America, and it was then that the Lord solidified my call into ministry.

The Lord led me to Kuyper College where I studied in their Pre-Seminary program in order to prepare for seminary studies in the future. I was extremely blessed by the Lord with wonderful, godly friends along the way, as well as godly professors who not only set a great example for us, but also who had a passion for ministry and training students for future ministry as well. Throughout my time at Kuyper, the Lord greatly developed me in my walk with Him, bringing me through the highs and lows, the mountain tops as well as the valleys, always walking with me; even though there were times when I didn't feel as near to Him, He was always by my side, never leaving me, nor forsaking me (Heb. 13:5). The Lord especially brought me through a season of spiritual desert over the course of my Sophomore year ending after a trip to Israel through Kuyper College which I had the blessing and privilege to go on. Looking back, I can see how the Lord has been shaping and molding me through those various experiences. Between my Junior and Senior year at Kuyper, my wife Kayla and I were married on May 5, 2018, and the Lord has greatly continued to shape and mold me through our marriage. I am thankful for the ways that the Lord encourages me through my wife as she is always there with a listening ear, an encouraging word at just the right time, and helps challenge me to be growing in various areas, whether that be my walk with the Lord, or as a future pastor. I am thankful that the Lord has blessed us with each other to walk through the various seasons of life together, through the good as well as the hard times; I love her immensely and am blessed by her continual encouragement and support as I follow God's call into ministry.

After graduating from Kuyper College in 2019, the Lord led my wife and I to Mid-America Reformed Seminary in Dyer, IN where I have been studying, working on my M.Div. degree, and where, Lord willing, I will be graduating from in just a couple of months. Over the course of my time at Mid-America, the Lord has continued to mold, shape, and prepare me for ministry, as well as help me continue to grow in my walk with Him whether through classes or the wonderful community at Mid-America, once again being by my side through dry deserts as well as lush green springs.

At Mid-America, through the Ministerial Apprenticeship Program, I have had the blessing of getting to experience various areas and aspects of ministry



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*Faith Journey (continued)*

already, putting what I have been learning in the classroom into practice in a variety of ways, but especially through a couple of internships. During the summer of 2021, I had the blessing and privilege to serve at Grace Church (PCA) in Lansing, IL, and then last summer, 2022, I had the privilege and blessing to serve at Borculo CRC in Zeeland, MI. Through the pastors that I have served under, as well as my ministerial supervisor, the Lord has continued to help me to grow in preparation for ministry and in my daily walk with Him. Through it all, the Lord has proved Himself faithful time and time again, whether in the brightest days or the darkest nights, and I look forward to seeing how He will continue to grow, mold, and shape me in the years to come.

Soli Deo Gloria

Joshua T. Carpenter

*Statement of Reason*

I am seeking candidacy and ordination in the Christian Reformed Church in North America as Minister of the Word for a few reasons: one, to answer and respond obediently to God's call in my life to ministry; two, to proclaim the Good News of the Gospel to those who are lost, to those who are wandering and wayward; and three, shepherding His people as a faithful undershepherd of the Good Shepherd, training, encouraging, nourishing, and discipling God's people, helping them to grow in their walks with Him, to feed them with His Word, walking alongside them through the mountains as well as the valleys of life.

Joshua T. Carpenter



*Name:* Jeremy Engbers

*Current Place of Residence:* Olympia,  
Washington, USA

*Education:*

Dordt College  
Sioux Center, IA  
B.A. Theology, 2014

Fuller Theological Seminary  
Pasadena, CA  
M.Div, expected June 2023

Calvin Theological Seminary  
Grand Rapids, MI  
EPMC, 2023

*Internships/ Experience:*

Faith CRC  
Pella, IA  
Director of Youth Ministries,  
2017-19

Olympia CRC  
Olympia, WA  
Director of Worship, Youth, and  
Family, 2019-Present

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*Faith Journey*

When I was younger, we would get speakers at chapels or conferences that came in with these amazing testimonies about how they were in jail or using hard drugs and Jesus got a hold of them and their life was completely turned around. I was envious of those stories because I felt like that was a story worth telling, an example of God's greatest show of faithfulness, mercy, and love. That's not my story.

But over time, and with a little perspective, I've come to realize that my story is worth telling too. God has been faithful to me, too, and the Holy Spirit is continuing to shape, mold, and teach me in ways that have significantly changed who I once was. Mine is a story of how God has been faithful in guiding an ordinary CRC kid in unspectacular moments through the slow unfolding of his awesome plan for my life.

Unspectacular. That's the thing about infant baptisms, usually. There are no flashing lights, no loud band playing. There was no eruption of applause. They probably got the water from the tap. That's the way mine was, anyways, in a CRC church in Whitinsville, Massachusetts. But for all of the unspectacular things that happened that morning, what it represented was spectacular. It was an amazing display of God's faithfulness to me and to my family. That the reality of Christ is the reality in which I now live.

One of my favorite things about baptisms is the promise that the congregation makes to walk with the family and the baptized, and to help raise them in the faith. I don't think I know anyone that was present for my baptism outside of my family (we moved nine months later), but the idea remains. The Christian community in our CRC church in the southwest Chicago area loved me well. Whether it was Cadets or Catechism, God showed his love and grace to me in the ordinary classrooms of our church building.

I had a seemingly normal conversation with a teacher of mine in August before my sophomore year of high school. My summer job was cleaning the school, so run-ins with teachers were common. He asked me if I wanted to help lead worship for school chapels during the school year. The worship director at my church had recently resurrected my piano lessons from when I was younger and was teaching me new things about playing and leading in music. I told my teacher, "Yes." Little did I know that moment was the beginning of God's call for me to work in the church.

Musical worship has been a significant part of my life. It's how I've cut my teeth in church leadership. It's what redirected who I wanted to become in college and led me to where I am today. In the simplicity of sitting by myself in an empty room with four chords, God has drawn me close to Him. It's how God taught me to love Him.

I didn't want to go to seminary after college. A better way of saying it might be that I didn't want to be a 25-year-old M.Div. graduate with little confidence that I could offer a church anything. I stayed at Dordt to work in the Admissions Department. In my first year, I was in Philadelphia for a string of college fairs and I had some time to explore downtown. By a leading of prayer, I ended up eating lunch with two homeless men. They asked me if I knew Jesus. Listening to their stories is how God taught me to love people.

My now-wife and I were planning our wedding and the next step of our life together. I had been accepted to Fuller Theological Seminary and we

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*Faith Journey (continued)*

were planning to move to Los Angeles - Los Angeles, the City of Stars. God had different plans. Instead, we ended up in small-town Pella, Iowa. It wasn't necessarily what I wanted at the time, but it was another place where God showed that He knows better than me and where He showed us his faithfulness. We were filled in that time and God taught us many things about what it means to serve a Christian community.

We're in Olympia, Washington now and, more than ever, I feel God's call to love Him and love people well. As I reflect on my life, it's cool to see the small moments that God used to shape me in quarter-turns – a string of dominoes that sometimes take forever to fall. Do I wish that God would more often employ airplanes with banner messages telling us where to go or how to live? Absolutely. Do I trust Him, as we go forward, to not always give us what we want, but always what we need? Unequivocally, yes.

God often uses ordinary means to show his extraordinary faithfulness. It's why I love the church, because I think the church can be a vehicle for such a faithfulness. I am humbled by God's call and eager to serve in the ways that He has equipped me.

Jeremy Engbers

*Statement of Reason*

At the end of John's Gospel, Jesus turns to Peter and asks, "Do you love me? Feed my sheep." Those are the words that call me to seek ordination in the Christian Reformed Church. We live in a broken world, wrecked by sin. I am responding to God's call to care for his people and to see the power of the Gospel meet the whole of our individual and communal brokenness. I believe that God has prepared and equipped me for this work and I step forward in faith, trusting that He goes with me.

Jeremy Engbers



*Name:* Catherine L. Ferchau

*Current Place of Residence:* Edmonton,  
Alberta, Canada

*Education:*

Calvin Theological Seminary  
Grand Rapids, MI  
EPMC, 2023

Taylor Seminary/Kairos University  
Edmonton, AB  
M.Div., 2023

Grant MacEwan University  
Edmonton, AB  
American Sign Language -  
English Interpreting, 1999

Vancouver Community College  
Vancouver, BC  
Sign Language Studies, 1998

Camosun College  
Victoria, BC  
Associate of Arts (Psychology),  
1996

*Internships:*

Bethel Community Church  
Edmonton, AB,  
Intern of Pastoral Care, Prayer,  
and Missions  
February 2021- December 2021

*Languages:*

American Sign Language (ASL)

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*Faith Journey*

My story is not one of having grown up in the church. I came from a good home, but church just wasn't something we did. I do have memories of my mom speaking of Jesus on the odd occasion and I remember attending an Easter service once. So, how did I end up as a ministerial candidate? The short answer is four words: the grace of God. However, to elaborate a bit more, it really started with a grade four "playground evangelist" who was a pastor's kid and became my best friend. This friend started telling me about Jesus when we were 8 or 9 years old. Over the years, her family invited me to church events, and faithfully prayed for me. They didn't give up or lose hope. They just kept loving, and inviting, and praying. When we were 17 years old, the youth pastor asked if I wanted to pray and accept Jesus into my heart. I said no. In the week that followed though, I was restless and unsettled because I *did* believe. I just hadn't declared it. A multitude of questions had been cycling through my head. Finally, only one remained, "Why *not*?" The next time I went to youth group, I decisively informed the pastor it was time. I was ready to follow Jesus and accept him as my Lord and Saviour. I have never regretted that decision or looked back.

I started getting involved in a wide variety of ministries very early on and loved it! As time went on, I moved to other cities in the pursuit of education. Everywhere I went, priority one was finding a church to plug in to and serve. Over the years, I had multiple pastors ask me if I had considered vocational ministry, and each time, my answer was the same, a hard, "No." In hindsight, I was a bit like Jonah. I think I knew where the Lord was calling me, but I ran the other direction. Due to some difficult life circumstances, and my non-church upbringing, I felt I wasn't good enough, spiritual enough, or holy enough. So, I became a Sign Language Interpreter instead.

Shortly after starting out in my new profession, I went on a short-term mission to Ethiopia. It was there that I was asked to preach for the first time. I loved that too! Mere days after my return, I met my now beloved husband of 21 years. In the years that followed, we were blessed with three amazing daughters whom have brought us much joy and laughter. Thanks be to God for the gift these four are to me! Not long after our oldest was born, we transferred our membership to Bethel Community Church (CRC) in Edmonton, AB, and have been there ever since.

Fast forward to February of 2018, more than 20 years after accepting Jesus, I went to a healing prayer appointment. Though I figured I knew how the appointment would play out, I prayed beforehand, without really knowing what I was asking. My prayer was simply, "Lord, have your way within me." That prayer was answered in a completely unexpected way. I did experience incredible healing, but it was really a by-product of being in his presence. I knew I would never be the same. The head knowledge I had had become deeply implanted in my heart. About two weeks later, I was awakened in the middle of the night and felt compelled to pray. As I sat there, God distinctly impressed upon me, not once or twice, but three times, "Feed my sheep!" That was followed by, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few." I spent some time discerning what that meant with my then pastor and a few mature leaders in my church. They affirmed my call to vocational ministry and from there, after discussions with my family, I started taking one small step at a time. The first was applying to seminary.

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*Faith Journey (continued)*

Of course, the journey has not been without some bumps and bruises along the way. Trying to work and study through a global pandemic for one, while having children sent home to do school online, was challenging for sure. However, on the hardest days, I would come back to that profound encounter with the Lord, and that would renew my strength. I have also been blessed by some beloved prayer warriors who have been my Aaron and Hur. This, along with the unwavering support of my faithful husband, and here I am! Thanks be to God!

Cathy Ferchau

*Statement of Reason*

Through my time in seminary, and while interning/serving in various ministries over the years, I have had the opportunity to learn and grow significantly, while putting my God-given gifts to work. I have developed an even deeper love for people and a strong desire to see them reconciled to the Father through Jesus. I am passionate about pointing others to him in the pursuit of healing and wholeness, which again, I believe to be a natural by-product of being in his presence. I want to see people deepening in their personal relationships with Jesus and experience the deep joy that comes from having life, and having it to the full! So, whether it's in simple conversation, the building of relationships, discipleship, preaching, teaching, evangelism, prayer, or leading in worship, pointing others to Jesus is my aim. Through my journey, I have come to a special understanding and appreciation of what it means to be a Christian "with a Reformed accent". The emphasis on the sovereignty of God, and the belief in the communal and generational nature of the Abrahamic covenant resonate with me. Furthermore, though I sensed an earlier calling, and said no to it, I no longer want to do anything out of step with our triune God. I only want to live in obedience to him. Therefore, I will answer his call on my life affirmatively. This is why I am seeking ordination in the Christian Reformed Church of North America.

Cathy Ferchau



*Name:* Dylan A. Harper

*Current Place of Residence:* Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA

*Education:*

Durham College  
Whitby, ON  
Licensed Electrician, 2008

Victory Bible College  
Barrie, ON  
Christian Studies, 2017

Calvin Theological Seminary  
Grand Rapids, MI  
Master of Divinity, 2023

*Internships & Experience:*

Hope Fellowship Church  
Courtice, ON  
Connections/Youth Director  
May 2017 – July 2020

Encounter Church  
Kentwood, MI  
September 2020 – May 2022

Hariyo Kharka  
Kalinpong, West Bengal, India  
January 2023

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*Faith Journey*

Let me just begin by saying this is not the life I had planned for myself! I grew up in a home that was void of any faith, and believed that organized religion was just a big scam. I was taught to work hard, get a good education, and enjoy the life I could make for myself. This worldview produced in me a love for money which led me down dark paths and resulted in many personal hardships over the years. However, it also produced in me a good work ethic as I pursued a career in skilled trades, ultimately becoming a licensed electrician. At the age of twenty-seven, during a low point in my life, I experienced an inescapable prompting to accept an invitation to church by someone who, as it turns out, had been praying for me for years. The moment I stepped foot into that Pentecostal church, I was met with the love, the peace, and the compassion of Jesus Christ, and my life was changed forever.

Following that initial encounter with Christ, I started reading a Bible, and within a few weeks, I fully accepted Jesus into my heart as my personal Lord and Savior. I immediately got plugged into a thriving young adults ministry, and again, within only a few weeks, I was invited to join the leadership team because they saw something in me that I never saw in myself. It wasn't long before I realized I was home – this was where I was always meant to be. After several years of growing in my faith and serving in that church, I began to seriously discern my call to ministry. And it was on my thirtieth birthday that I officially walked away from my career as an electrician and enrolled in Bible College. It was around that season where I met my future wife through a ministry she was giving leadership to, and it was almost love at first sight, (I just didn't know it at the moment). God blessed me with a wife (Jessica) and daughter (Brooklyn) – the family I never knew I wanted, but definitely needed. And it was through my wife that I was first exposed to the Christian Reformed Church, and also where we began doing ministry together as a couple. I quickly developed a profound appreciation for Reformed Theology and began sensing God's calling to explore seminary as a next step after graduating Bible College. Calvin Theological Seminary was gracious enough to accept my application, and I began my studies through the Distance Learning Program while working as the Youth Director at the CRC we attended in Courtice, Ontario.

After successfully completing two years of studies online, God began nudging us in a new direction. We felt Him calling us to relocate our lives to Grand Rapids in order for me to carry on my studies as a residential student and for us to become members of Encounter Church. God has been very faithful in providing for us the church community we needed, which is where all three of us have now worshipped, and also served for several years as volunteers (Brooklyn especially), an intern (myself), and even as a staff member (Jessica). As I now approach graduation, I am beyond grateful that God would ever choose to forgive me for my sins and accept me as a child in the family of His kingdom, but also to bless me with a passionate heart for His people – the local church. As I've diligently prepared for full-time ministry over the past seven years through academic studies and various ministry experiences in different contexts, God truly has transformed my life in almost every way possible. I can't even begin describing how excited I am to accept my first official call and finally begin serving His people with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength as the person God has redeemed me to be.

Dylan A. Harper



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*Statement of Reason*

God willing, I desire to serve the local church as an ordained Minister of the Word. Ever since I accepted salvation by grace through faith, I have not experienced more purpose and more fulfillment than when I am faithfully serving God's people. At this point in my life, I cannot imagine doing anything else. Therefore, through the gifts He has blessed me with and by the power of the Holy Spirit in me, I hope to humbly answer God's call on my life through the proclaiming of His Word, through the administration of the Sacraments, through intentional discipleship, and generally leading and caring for His people day by day in whatever ways are needed. Also, I have a strong desire to actively share the good news of the gospel with those God brings into my life who are searching for more than what this world has to offer. In accordance with the plans and purposes that God wills, I believe there is hope in Christ for all those who are lost, and therefore, I will do everything I can to help the lost be found by giving testimony that, if God can save me and transform my life into what it is today, then He can do the same for them. May all the labor of my hands and feet be manifested glory given to God, and God alone.

Dylan A. Harper





*Name:* Jonathan Hwang (Juhun)

*Current Place of Residence:* Langley, BC,  
Canada

*Education:*

Columbia Bible College,  
Abbotsford, BC, Canada  
BA in Biblical Studies 2013

Regent College,  
Vancouver, BC, Canada  
MDiv, 2023

Calvin Theological Seminary  
Grand Rapids, MI  
EPMC, 2023

*Internships and Experience:*

Smyrna Presbyterian/Ekklesia CRC  
Langley, BC, Canada  
2010-2013

Handong International School  
Pohang, Korea  
2013-2018

Hope Community Church  
Surrey, BC, Canada  
2020-2022

*Languages:* Fluent in English and Korean

*Contact:*

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*Faith Journey*

I believe that God has shaped the person of God I am today through my faith journey. I would say that my initial stages of spiritual growth came to place without my intention. Having grown up in a Christian family and being a pastor's kid (PK), I was given a lot of expectations to be a role model Christian. Being a PK in a more traditional Korean Christian background did not help the cause in me finding my own identity as a child of God. Much of my faith journey in the early years of youth was religious. I had tried to dig deep into faith, but it was overwhelmed with much "doing" rather than "being." As I was doing so much in the church I realized later on that I did not spend much time living into the being that I am as a child of God. It is ironic and amazing how God used this time to teach me about the emptiness of ministry without really being in a deep, meaningful relationship with Him.

This trend continued on until I entered bible college. As I shifted from volunteer leadership at church to a more "official" position as a children's pastor, then eventually as a youth pastor, I was forced to wrestle with my identity even more. To add on top of that, I was now given responsibility to help and guide the younger generation in their search for faith! In this life stage, I was able to dig deeper into who God was and who I was in relation to him. As God further equipped me in and by his living Word, I was given an opportunity to work overseas as a teacher in a Christian school in Korea. In the six years of my life in my native country, I was able to experience the journey that many Koreans were going through, which was surprisingly different from the Korean-Canadian journey that I went through. I actually wrestled a lot with what it means to be a Christian, especially when it looked so different in Korea. I remember being very judgmental at some of the traditions that I thought were unhealthy in the Korean church in general. I was both humbled and challenged as I formed relationships with various Christians in different walks of life. In this stage, God really broadened my own lens, with which I viewed my faith. I was taught a very clear message, that I do not hold all the answers to the questions about my faith and Christianity in general. God works in mysterious ways and it is prideful of me to think that only my way and my tradition is the right one.

With such a humbling and shaping time in Korea, I am now back in Canada studying at Regent College, furthering my understanding about God and my faith. Ironically, through my studies I was introduced to a Christian Reformed Church, which was not Korean! I realized in recent years that I had been so confined in a narrow lens, which was somewhat widened in my years in Korea. It is now being further widened as I enjoy fellowship with sisters and brothers from diverse cultural, ethnic, and generational backgrounds. I am amazed and thankful that our God does not fit into my box of thinking and that he is so much bigger and creative than I am! I look back on my faith journey and am thankful for all God has taught me. God has spoken directly through the study of his Word (in bible college and now seminary) and also through life experiences. With a loving wife and two awesome sons, I continue to make every effort to be humble and attentive to what God is teaching me. They have been my source of joy and energy as we seek to be ready and obedient to his calling to serve in ministry together.

Jonathan Hwang

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*Statement of Reason*

I seek to become a minister of God's Word because I believe that God can even take my words and efforts for his Kingdom and glory. I believe that he has called me to participate in his ministry to disciple his people in faith. I seek to be obedient to my calling in humility and faithfulness as I play a small part in unveiling God's Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. I pray that God continues to guide and strengthen me to be faithful to his Word and teaching so that I may guide his church, his people, closer in relationship to Him.

Jonathan Hwang



*Name:* William Jones

*Current Place of Residence:* London,  
Ontario, Canada

*Degrees:*

Tyndale University  
Toronto, Ontario  
Bachelor of Arts  
English & Psychology, 2017

Fuller Theological Seminary  
Pasadena, California  
Master of Divinity, 2023

Calvin Theological Seminary  
Grand Rapids, MI  
EPMC Certification, 2023

*Internships/Experience:*

Zion Christian Reformed Church  
Oshawa, Ontario  
Worship & Ministry Coordinator  
(2011-2021)

Tyndale University & Seminary  
Toronto, Ontario  
Chapel Coordinator (2014-2015)

Durham Christian High School  
Bowmanville, Ontario  
Spiritual Life Director (2017-2021)

Talbot Street CRC  
London, Ontario  
Pastor of Youth & Discipleship  
(2022-2023)

*Contact:*

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### *Faith Journey*

I grew up with a beautiful experience of Christian community. I was raised in a Christian home, attended Christian schools and have always been actively involved in a Christian church. Looking back, I can see God's hand in my formation throughout my childhood and adolescent years. I started playing the piano and organ in worship at the age of 12, and was hired as Worship & Ministry Coordinator at Zion Christian Reformed Church at the age of 17 while finishing high school. My faith grew deeply through serving the local church and I grew to love God and love His church from a young age; however, it wasn't until my university years that my faith became real in a way that went beyond "doing faith." In my final year at Tyndale University, I took a week-long intensive course on *The Integration of Christianity and Psychology*. On the first day of class, the professor looked each one of us in the eye and said, "You are a beloved child of God." I had never had it said to me this plainly before. The familiar saying *all in God's timing* became so evident to me in this moment, for it was as if God spoke something to me and I finally heard it so clearly that I couldn't miss it. This truth took root in my heart, mind and soul in a way that I can only attribute to the Holy Spirit. I left this class with a profound heart, mind and soul knowledge that I was loved by God and that he was calling me to a pastoral ministry of doing precisely what my professor had done for me: sharing the beautiful, transformative good news of Jesus. I enrolled for the Masters of Divinity program at Fuller Theological Seminary the next week. While I love the Christian Reformed Church, I have always been drawn to studying alongside those who might not have been raised in the same tradition. I experienced this deep ecumenical beauty in my studies at Tyndale University - a multi-denominational institution. It was through interactions in diverse communities like these that my faith was challenged and deepened. Ironically, I came to know and love what it is to be Reformed by not attending a Reformed school, for it forced me to be able to answer *why I believe what I believe*. Up to this point, I can see how God has been at work to make me more aware of His presence, not only in my life, but in the people, the city and the world around me. He continues to do so. It has shaped how I've come to see the pastoral calling, to be watchful for and anticipate those moments when God shows up and to call attention to what God is doing in our midst, for indeed, He is doing something.

William Jones

### *Statement of Reason*

A mentor once told me, "Only go into Church ministry if you absolutely have to." I'll never forget that. It sums up a lot of why I'm seeking ordination in the Christian Reformed Church. Seeking ordination feels less like a choice and more like a surrender to what God has called me to. It is a challenging day to be a Christian, much less a pastor; however, I believe we live in a season that is ripe for the work of the Spirit. I seek ordination as a Minister of the Word with fear and trembling some days, but seek it with a grounded hope that God is at work doing something new and simply invites me to join the work He's doing. That gets me up in the morning.

William Jones





*Name:* Kevin Kornelis

*Current Place of Residence:* Holland,  
Michigan, USA

*Education:*

Calvin University  
Grand Rapids MI  
B.A. Religion and History, 2013

Calvin Theological Seminary  
Grand Rapids MI  
MDiv, May 2023

*Internships/ Experience:*

Heliopolis Community Church  
Cairo, Egypt  
Youth Pastor,  
August 2018 - June 2021

Central Avenue CRC  
Holland, MI  
Part Time Interim  
Associate Pastor,  
August 2021 - June 2023

*Contact:*

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kkornelis6@gmail.com

### *Faith Journey*

I was born and raised in a Christian home where my faith was nurtured as far back as I remember. My parents raised me in a Christian Reformed Church where I baptized and fed the Word of God through weekly corporate worship, Sunday School, Catechism classes, and youth group. In 9th grade I made profession of faith.

After high school I attended Calvin College. For the first year and a half I was unsure of what to study and what career to pursue. Halfway through my sophomore year I decided that my Religion class were what interested me the most and I decided to declare my major in Religion. My college years were tough and full of questioning. I am thankful that, by God's grace, I had many great friends and mentors that guided me through those years as I was discerning many matters of faith.

After college I moved to Bethlehem in the West Bank to teach history and Bible at a local Christian School. After two years of living there I met my wife and a year and a half after that we were married. After a year of marriage and living in Bethlehem, we were denied a visa suddenly and forced to move within a month's time. It was this time of upheaval and uncertainty that led us to where we are today. In the course of that month, through much prayer and wise council, we discerned the Lord was leading us first to move to Cairo Egypt and second the Lord was calling me into future pastoral ministry.

After moving to Egypt, I enrolled in Calvin's MDiv distance learning program and started working as a youth pastor at an international church. I enjoyed my work and found my studies challenging. Once again, during this time I was wrestling with orthodoxy and discerning matters of faith. Then, after 3 and half years of living in Egypt and two children later, we discerned a call to return to the States.

After moving to the States, we landed in Holland MI. It was here that I started working at and attending Central Avenue CRC while I concluded my course work at CTS. Central Avenue brought a breath of fresh air to our family. It has been during my time here that the Lord instilled in me a passion for the Word of God and for preaching. Over the last two years of being at Central Avenue CRC I feel the Lord has confirmed his call on my life and I am excited to soon enter full time, ordained, pastoral ministry.

Kevin Kornelis

### *Statement of Reason*

I am seeking ordination, first because I believe that God has called me into pastoral ministry. Second, I have full confidence in the ordinary means of grace that Christ has given His church. I believe that through the proclamation of the Word and the administration of the sacraments the lost are saved and the saints are sanctified. I am seeking ordination specifically in the Christian Reformed Church because of my deep love and appreciation for its Reformed and Confessional history and character.

Kevin Kornelis





*Name:* Sung Su Lee

*Current Place of Residence:* Jackson Heights, New York, USA

*Education:*

Stony Brook University  
Stony Brook, NY  
BS: Computer Science/ Applied Mathematics & Statistics, 2001

Westminster Theological Seminary  
Glenside, PA  
MA: Urban Ministry, 2010

Calvin Theological Seminary  
Grand Rapids, MI  
M. Div: Pastoral Ministry, 2016

City University of New York  
New York, NY  
MS: Data Science, 2022

*Internships/ Experience:*

Reformed Church of Newtown  
Elmhurst, NY  
Youth and College Group  
March 2015 - August 2018

*Contact:*

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*Faith Journey*

In the Puritan prayer, *The Valley of Vision*, there is a line that always strikes a deep chord in my heart, “Lord, in the daytime stars can be seen from deepest wells, and the deeper the wells the brighter thy stars shine; Let me find thy light in my darkness, thy life in my death, thy joy in my sorrow, thy grace in my sin, thy riches in my poverty, thy glory in my valley.”

Growing up in a broken and non-Christian immigrant family, I knew firsthand the sorrows of living in darkness. Feeling unwanted and desiring to be loved, I set my life journey in my early childhood in search of a loving family: either to repair my broken family or to find someplace where I would be loved. In my deepest of solitary wells, I sought to fight tooth and nail to raise myself above poverty. My childhood and early adult years were filled with studying and working to help my family earn money. As the years passed, my worldview morphed into the mindset if I could earn enough money, perhaps my family would be healed.

In college, while studying and working, I learned of a breach of trust in my family which led to an existential crisis: all the years I spent working and studying to heal my family were futile. My hope was dashed, and I had little to live for. During that time, God had sent a Christian sister who shared her testimony with me during a late night of lab work. She shared that despite growing up in a broken home, the love of God gave her a hope that would never be lost. Her testimony ignited my heart to learn more about the gospel. Immediately, I started attending an off-campus evening service during the week and learned about the love of God as perfectly displayed in Christ.

When I graduated college, I joined an RCA church in Queens, NY. There I was baptized and learned more about the Christian faith. During my time there, I came to grow in community. When I observed that my pastor needed help, I did everything I could to help. With his guidance, my desire to help, and my desire to grow in Scripture, I enrolled in Westminster Theological Seminary’s Urban Ministry program. My purpose was to grow in my understanding of Scripture and to assist my pastor. I enjoyed my years there and grew in my love for the Reformed faith. Shortly around the time of my completion of my program, my pastor went to answer another call and I was to help lead the congregation for four years in serving as a small group leader, elder, classis delegate, and church planter. Eventually, I earned my Master of Divinity from Calvin Theological Seminary.

I confidently know that the gospel can heal every wound and that God truly deserves the glory. I am thankful for the valleys knowing full well that God’s love shined brightest to heal my heart.

Sung Su Lee



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*Statement of Reason*

Because of my love for the Reformed faith, the values, and the direction of the Christian Reformed Church, I seek candidacy as a Minister of the Word. In the denomination, I trust that there would be full accountability as I continue to develop my preaching and teaching gifts in the CRC's gospel-centered network of church polity and faithful ministers. In addition, I have full confidence that in the CRCNA, my love for God, His Word, and the discipleship of the laity would grow in the denomination's fostering environment. Let us journey together.

Sung Su Lee



*Name:* Brandon Lyman Mick

*Current Place of Residence:* Otley, Iowa,  
USA

*Education:*

Northwestern College  
(now University)  
St. Paul, MN  
B.A., Criminology & Psychology,  
2001

Wheaton College Graduate School  
Wheaton, IL  
M.A., History of Christianity, 2009

Calvin Theological Seminary  
Grand Rapids, MI  
M.Div., 2022

*Work Experience:*

Valley Church  
West Des Moines, IA  
2002-2006

St. Mark Lutheran Church  
West Des Moines, IA  
2010-2011

Westkirk Presbyterian Church  
Urbandale, IA  
2011-2021

Connect Church (CRC)  
Pella, IA  
2021- Present

*Contact:*

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*Faith Journey*

I had a fairly routine evangelical upbringing. Around the age of 6, I recall sitting on the couch with my mother, asking “Jesus into my heart”. I’m not really sure why I extended this invitation to the Lord of the Universe, except that I wanted to be able to take communion like my older brother. My faith, for the 15 or so years following this experience, reflected my general lack of understanding or a personal submission to God and His work in this world and my life. I had little knowledge of Christ, nor any desire to grow in Him.

Though I didn’t have a desire to seek after God, I can see now that He was seeking after me. Looking back on my childhood, I recall sitting in our small church hearing God speak to me. As a child, God was calling me to His ministry. But I would not submit my life to His calling. Floating through life, I eventually found myself in law school. It was then that the circumstances of my life had sufficiently broken me of my own will and God found me at the bottom. I can still go to the exact spot of concrete where *my* life ended. Soon after, I pulled out of law school and began a new life.

Seeking to submit my life to the Father’s will, to Christ’s calling and to the Spirit’s revealing work, I began a life in ministry. I started as an intern at Johnston Evangelical Free Church in Johnston, Iowa, serving there for a summer. I was then hired at Valley Evangelical Free Church in West Des Moines, Iowa. I served at Valley as a Student Ministries Associate for 4 years. After this I attended Wheaton College Graduate School to study Christian History. After graduating with an MA in Christian History and moving back to the Des Moines area I was hired at St. Mark Lutheran Church as their Director of Discipleship. I served at St. Mark for two and half years. I then served at Westkirk Presbyterian Church, in Urbandale, Iowa, for almost 10 years. While at Westkirk I began working toward my Masters of Divinity, as an online student, at Calvin Theological Seminary. Nearing the end of my studies at Calvin, I was hired at Connect Church (CRC) in Pella, IA where I still serve as the Worship and Discipleship Pastor.

My wide range of ministry roles and varied denominational experiences have uniquely shaped me in ministry. Odd as my journey in life and ministry may seem, it has been through these experiences that I have discovered, like a homecoming, the beauty and truthfulness of Reformed theology. It has also given me unique perspective on the various people to whom I’ve ministered. Through each experience I have learned how to better understand, listen/speak to, and care for God’s people. I look forward to where and to whom Jesus leads us next.

Brandon Lyman Mick

*Statement of Reason*

I am seeking ordination as Minister of the Word in the CRCNA, with God helping me, in order to put down roots among a people; to care for and walk alongside them as we, together, pursue Jesus and the Spirit’s work in our lives and the world. Through my seminary and recent ministry experience, I believe I have found a faith family in the Christian Reformed Church. The confessional heritage, the rich liturgical tradition, and gracious and welcoming posture of the people we have met and worked among has made us feel at home in the CRC. We look forward to joining our lives with yours and are excited to see what the future holds for us all, trusting our lives to our faithful savior, Jesus Christ.

Brandon Lyman Mick





*Name:* Robert R Moore, III

*Current Place of Residence:* Rockford,  
Michigan, USA

*Education:*

Kuyper College  
Grand Rapids, MI  
B.S. in Biblical Theology and  
Youth Ministry, 2012

Calvin Theological Seminary,  
Grand Rapids, MI  
MA-DIV, 2023

*Internships/ Experience:*

Student Ministry Director  
River Rock Church  
Rockford, MI,  
June 2012 - November 2020

Intern at River Rock Church,  
Rockford, MI  
September, 2018 – May, 2020

*Contact:*

616-302-5824  
bobbym87@yahoo.com

*Faith Journey*

At five-years-old, my father followed God's call to move our family from Houston, TX to Grand Rapids, MI to attend Calvin Theological Ministry. Five years later, my father moved our family to Durham, NC where he would plant a multi-cultural CRC church called *The River*. Having a minister as a father resulted in God playing a significant role in my life as I watched my parents faithfully rely on God. I have put my faith in God for so long that I can't remember a specific moment where I gave my life to Christ. That said, I spent much of my early life going through the motions, attending church out of obligation.

Throughout my adolescence, I struggled to commit to the life which God has called his followers. In High School, I began drinking and doing drugs which quickly got out of hand as I would eventually find myself addicted to opioids. That was until two years after high school when the Holy Spirit melted my heart of stone; dramatically changing the trajectory of my life.

In late February, 2008 I moved back with my parents, who were living in Belding, MI. By the summer of 2008, God made clear to me that my walk with Him would revolve around a life-long call to ministry. That fall, I enrolled at Kuyper College and began working with the youth ministry program at Oakwood CRC. At this time, I also began dating Carissa, the woman I would eventually marry.

God used my time at Kuyper College to grow my knowledge of and love for parish ministry. When I graduated in the spring of 2012 with a degree in Biblical Theology and Youth Ministry, God had solidified this call in my head and heart for a lifelong call of vocational ministry. After graduation, I took a part-time position at River Rock Church that would turn into a full time position a year later.

In my nine years working as the Student Ministry Director at River Rock Church, God brought me closer to Him than ever before. Through weekly youth group meetings, retreats, mission trips, and meeting with students struggling to navigate the challenges of life, God showed me how He could take someone as inadequate as I to help others learn to love Him.

God also grew my love for parish ministry as River Rock Church became more than a community, it became our family. When my wife gave birth to our first daughter (Marylind) in 2017, our church family was our support system. God used the love and support of our church family to shape my understanding of God's call inside the walls of the church.

In 2018 I felt God calling me to attend Calvin Theological Seminary to further my education in preparation for future ministry in the Christian Reformed Church. I went from full-time ministry down to part-time in order to focus on school and once again, our church family supported us. After struggling to conceive a child for two years, God showed His faithfulness as my wife became pregnant with our second daughter, Talia; which comes from two Hebrew words that mean *dew from the Lord*. We chose this name because through this struggle, God had reminded us that He is the provider.

My time at Calvin Theological Seminary has lasted two years longer than what I had originally planned but through this, I learned to trust in God's faithfulness. My biblical and theological understanding of God and the role of the church grew exponentially during my time at seminary.

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*Faith Journey (continued)*

Throughout this entire journey I have been able to look back and see how God has been leading me each step up the way. God continues to use my struggle with addiction to bring others closer to Him, He uses my experiences in ministry to continue to grow me as a leader in the church, and He has used my time at Kuyper College and Calvin Theological Seminary to grow my biblical and theological understanding of the role of the Church as His physical representation on earth. While this journey has not always been easy, I look forward with great anticipation to the way that God will continue to work in and through my life to bring others into a close relationship with Him.

Robert R Moore, III

*Statement of Reason*

I decided to attend Calvin Theological Seminary because I knew that God had called me to help shepherd His Church. I did not take the decision lightly; in fact, I pushed back against God's calling. But, much like Moses as He stood in the presence of God in the burning bush, God shut down every argument I made for why I shouldn't become a *minister of the Word* in the Christian Reformed Church. In my time at seminary God has repeatedly affirmed my calling to lead His flock under His guidance. Furthermore, God has used my time at Seminary to greatly increase the love that I have for the CRC. After graduating and completing the ordination process, it is my hope to continue pursuing my life-long vocational call of ministry in the CRC.

Robert R Moore, III



*Name:* Anastaze Nzabonimpa

*Current Place of Residence:* Grand Rapids,  
Michigan, USA

*Education:*

Law Development Center  
Kampala, Uganda  
Diploma in Law  
2002

Kampala University  
Bachelors of Public Administration  
Kampala, Uganda  
2013 - 2015

Calvin Theological Seminary  
Grand Rapids, MI  
Masters of Divinity  
2017 - 2020

*Internships:*

Madison Square Church  
Grand Rapids, MI  
2017-2018

*Languages Spoken:*

English (Fluent)  
French (Fluent)  
Kiswahili (Fluent)  
Kinyarwanda (Native Speaker)  
Lingala (Moderate)  
Luganda (Proficient)

*Contact:*

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*Faith Journey*

My coming to know Jesus as my Lord and my savior started when I was mature enough to understand and differentiate between good and bad. Between what is important and what is not. I was born a catholic and started to attend mass at an early age because the parish was not built far away from home. At an early age I became an altar boy and I enjoyed being in the church. I went to a catholic school and enjoyed singing in a choir, to read the word of God, and I developed an interest in becoming a priest. After high school, I joined a congregation of the white fathers. This is a congregation of the catholic church and they serve as missionaries in different countries where they have convents. But, genocide erupted when I was in early stages of my journey to becoming a priest.

In 1994, I went to Congo where I sought refuge with millions of other Rwandans who ran away because of the war in Rwanda. When I arrived in Congo I continued my plan and joined the catholic church where we were staying. The parish priest helped me to put together all my papers and started to prepare for studies in a major seminary. Again, the war erupted when I was preparing to travel to Italy to study from there since I was a refugee, the logistics took a bit of time.

It is during this time that God showed me his mercy and I saw his power, and I gave my life fully to Jesus. The war in Congo pushed us into a virgin forest and we stayed there for many months. A year ended when we were meandering without knowing where we were going and many were killed by hunger, bullets, and others fell in rivers and disappeared. During these terrible moments God spoke to me and promised to keep me and bring me back to Rwanda. God speaks and God protects. It is during this time when there was no food, no clean water, when we had no shoes and we had no clothes (I had one t-shirt and a pair of jeans only) that I saw God's power and his love.

After a long time in a forest, together with a few people who survived, we came out of the forest and went back to Rwanda. While in Rwanda I continued to serve God as an evangelist and a preacher of the word. I joined a pentecostal movement and we moved in many places preaching and praying for people who gave their lives to Jesus. But this one did not take long either. In 2000, I fled to Uganda. While in Uganda, I continued to serve the Lord. I was ordained as a Pastor in 2002 and as an overseer in 2003. In 2009 I planted a church and I pastored it until the time I came here to the USA.

When I arrived here in 2015, I joined the Christian Reformed Church and since that time together with my family we attend Alger Park CRC. I did not want to continue to do any ministry work. I wanted to go to University for a masters degree in Public Administration, majoring in non profit organizations. I was trying to secure an admission in Grand Valley State University, when I met someone I did not know and told me how I was running away from God. After some time I had to join Calvin Theological Seminary for an M Div. After four years of studies I graduated and joined Resonate in 2022 for career missionary work in Kampala-Uganda. So my faith journey has been so divine and full of miracles. I saw God intervening in every step of my life.

Anastaze Nzabonimpa

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*Statement of Reason*

Since I came here I have attended the Christian Reformed Church. I went to Calvin Theological Seminary and enjoyed reformation theology. I loved confessions and the liturgy applied by Christian Reformed Churches. I want to continue with this good tradition and I want to do it when I am ordained, so that I can be able to administer sacraments. The Christian Reformed Church has been a home and a family to me and my family since we came here. The better way to give back to her is to serve her as a minister of the word and be able to continue this beautiful relationship with my brothers and sisters we share faith and beliefs with. Also I am serving with Resonate as a career missionary. I want to be able to help people I will serve with credentials that allow me to fully exercise my faith and my beliefs.

Anastaze Nzabonimpa





*Name:* Cameron W. Oegema

*Current Place of Residence:* Ingersoll,  
Ontario, Canada

*Education:*

Redeemer University College  
Ancaster, Ontario  
B.A., 2013

Heritage Theological Seminary  
Cambridge, Ontario  
M. Div, 2020

Calvin Theological Seminary  
Grand Rapids, Michigan  
EPMC, 2023

*Internships/Experience:*

Fellowship CRC  
St. Thomas, Ontario  
Youth Pastor, 2015-2017

Westview Baptist Church  
London, Ontario  
Pastoral Care Intern,  
January - April 2020

Maranatha CRC  
Woodstock, Ontario  
Interim Pastor,  
April - September 2021

Bethel CRC  
Listowel, Ontario  
Interim Associate Pastor,  
March 2023-present.

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### *Faith Journey*

For much of my life, there seemed to be this occasionally spoken idea that people only went to church because their families did, and if you wanted to be assured that your faith was your own, you would leave your parents' denomination as soon as possible and go somewhere else. With time and the wisdom of hindsight, I can look back and confidently say that this is not the case, and that it is a sign of God's faithfulness and grace that a child can take on their parents faith and still have it be theirs.

I grew up as the oldest son of turkey farmers near St. Thomas, Ontario. Had I stayed, I'd be the fourth generation. It's probably fair to say I took a classic CRC route through education: I attended Christian grade school in St. Thomas, Christian high school in nearby London, and I completed my undergraduate degree at a Reformed school, Redeemer University College (now just Redeemer University) in Ancaster. In all those places, my faith was shaped, grown, molded, challenged, strengthened, and affirmed through the work and efforts of so many people in my life, from friends to classmates, from roommates to professors, from siblings to pastors. In so many of those ways, whether through conversations with friends, classroom discussions, or through simply taught lessons from the Heidelberg Catechism, God continued to teach me.

The challenge I had growing up was that it felt to teenage me as though our church had a revolving door of pastors coming through. After the longtime pastor who baptized me left our church to take a call elsewhere, our church felt as though it was vacant more often than not. One pastor took our call briefly before leaving to take a chaplaincy at a university. Another pastor was forced to retire due to cancer treatments. Through some of my most formative years, we were vacant. From the time I was 10 to the time I was 16, we were vacant for four of those six years. Our church declined, with membership leaving frequently for other churches or simply leaving church altogether. That included so many of my friends, whose families left for churches who were investing more into youth programming. My parents both served on council during this time, and I saw the toll it was taking. But by God's grace, we endured.

When we did have a pastor, he took the time to invest in those of us youth who remained. He spent time with each of us, helping us to understand our gifts and abilities. I suspected, in that time, that he was encouraging me to think about pastoral ministry. It wasn't a surprise, eventually, when he came right out and said it. I politely said I'd consider it, but even so, I had no intention of heading to ministry when I began my time at Redeemer. I had no idea what I wanted to do, in fact. I had some vague thoughts about being a teacher, maybe, but nothing firm. Really, I was going to Redeemer because I was going to play soccer there. After year one, it became apparent that I was just directionless. It was a simple conversation with my dad, where he reminded me of Pastor Vic's encouragement, that the light turned on. The Spirit was at work in that random Wendy's in downtown Hamilton. God continued, in myriad and unexpected ways, to confirm this calling on my life throughout my years at Redeemer and beyond.

After finishing Redeemer and taking a year away from studies to give my mind a much-needed rest, I began attending Heritage Theological Seminary in Cambridge, ON – a bit closer to home than Grand Rapids. After a year of full-time studies, I opted to take a position as a youth pastor in the other CRC in St. Thomas while continuing on a part-time basis. Through weekly

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*Faith Journey (continued)*

youth nights, SERVE trips, All Ontario Youth Conventions, and conversations with my pastor and my youth team, I found myself constantly challenged and encouraged in ministry. My time there ended in 2017. It was during this time I met my wife and eventual mother of our two wonderful children, Kristi. We got married shortly after, and moved to Ingersoll, ON, where she was working. I continued with part-time studies while heading back to the home farm to help keep school financial costs down, and also volunteering where I could at our new church home, Ingersoll CRC. I served on the worship committee, with the youth leadership team, and occasionally preached. We were vacant at the time, and because of my prior experience in a vacant church, I wanted to make sure to do all I could to ease the burden on council and to make sure the youth were not left behind.

When the pandemic hit in 2020, a few things were all happening at once. I was beginning the process of starting the EPMC, I was wrapping up my time interning at a church in London and preparing to graduate from Heritage, and we were expecting our first child. Within a month of everything closing down, my internship ended, my time at Heritage came to a close, and most importantly, our daughter Charlotte was born. Once our technical capability was settled and ready to go, I wound up preaching a lot because we were still vacant. For a while, I wasn't sure how I was able to get through that. Being a first-time parent is hard. Being a first-time parent with little support because of a raging global pandemic while also seeking to help the needs of our church however I could while also holding down a full-time job is not something I'd wish on anyone. But as I think back on that time now, I'm reminded of one of my favourite verses from 2 Corinthians 12, of God speaking to Paul: "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me." Those same Reformed Christian principles that seemed like they were my parents' and not my own when I was younger were the ones helping sustain me through these times of hardship. It's all about Him. We pray in the Lord's Prayer "your kingdom come, your will be done." If my ministry has a theme, I want it to be that one – that's God's will is done in and through me for His glory.

Cameron W. Oegema

*Statement of Reason*

The CRC is my home. It's been my home since I was born and baptized into it, and its people, while imperfect and marred by the scars of sin in our world, have loved me for who I am from my first day. It's also my theological home, rooted deeply in Scripture and steeped in the Reformed tradition. It is partially in response to those things that I wish to be ordained as a Minister of the Word and Sacrament in the CRC. Mostly, however, it is in obedient response to the call that the Lord has placed on my life to continue to love and serve his people through ordained ministry – through my gifts of preaching and teaching, through my ability to care for his sheep, and through my desire to grow in these areas and more. This is the church that taught me that my only comfort in life and in death is "that I am not my own, but belong, body and soul, in life and in death, to my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ. He has fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood, and has set me free from the tyranny of the devil. He also watches over me in such a way that not a hair can fall from my head without the will of my Father in heaven; in fact, all things must work together for my salvation. Because I belong to him, Christ, by his Holy Spirit, assures me of eternal life and makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready from now on to live for him." God has called me to be here, so here is where I want to be.

Cameron W. Oegema



*Name:* Christopher Dahl Park

*Current Place of Residence:* Aurora,  
Colorado, USA

*Education:*

Colorado School of Mines  
Golden, Colorado  
B.S. in Petroleum Engineering,  
2011

Southwestern Baptist  
Theological Seminary  
Fort Worth, Texas  
M.Div, 2019

Calvin Theological Seminary  
Grand Rapids, MI  
EPMC, 2023

*Internships/ Experience:*

Flower Mound Korean Church  
Flower Mound, Texas  
September 2016 - December 2018

Logos Central Chapel  
Centennial, Colorado  
September 2019 - August 2021

New Gate Church  
Aurora, Colorado  
September 2021 - Present

*Languages:*

English - fluent  
Korean - moderate

*Contact:*

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*Faith Journey*

My faith formation started at an early age. Being born into a Korean American, Christian family, God and church was highly emphasized. This upbringing allowed God to move my heart at a young age to know Jesus Christ of my Lord and Savior as well as be repentant of my sins. God used the prompting of an Awana handbook and my parents' guidance to come into relationship with Him at the age of 6. Although I was very young, I had a deep understanding of the consequences of my sins and God's redemption through Jesus who overcame sin and death through his life, death, and resurrection.

My childhood and adolescence were about coming to understand my relationship with God with my heart more than my head. It was learning not just what is right and wrong, but coming to understand why I must seek holiness, righteousness, and obedience in my walk with God. My college and young adult years were filled with wrestling with God. I struggled with identity and purpose as well as wrestled with God regarding whether I was being called into ministry. In my mid to late twenties, God had to humble me to understand my reliance should be on Him alone, not my own wisdom, strength, or abilities. Wrestling and being humbled finally brought me to a point where I felt called by God to step into ministry and start seminary.

Seminary was a time for growth in understanding doctrines and theology. It was also a time for equipping me for my purpose of wanting to serve God and others well through sharing the gospel and discipleship. Upon graduating, I learned to apply what I had learned in seminary to ministry. I was also learning how to stay rooted in God in my own walk and not let my vocation as a pastor take away from my personal worship of God. Marriage has also taught me more about dying to myself and learning to love sacrificially which I also applied to ministry.

Coming into the Christian Reformed Church (CRC), I have come to understand and affirm the Apostles, the Nicene, and the Athanasian Creeds. I have also come to learn and affirm the Three Forms of Unity – the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort. These creeds and confessions are important in understanding the Reformed perspective of Christian faith. The candidacy process in the CRC has been helpful, through mentoring and taking classes at Calvin Seminary, to learn how I can be faithful to my calling as a future minister in the CRC.

Christopher Dahl Park

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*Statement of Reason*

I am called into ministry by God and have received confirmation from those around me as well. In seeking to do ministry, I would like to seek candidacy in the Christian Reformed Church (CRC). Coming from a non-CRC background and upon graduating seminary from a Southern Baptist seminary, I desired to find a denomination that I align with regards with theology, mission, and serving. In searching for such a denomination, I was thankfully introduced to the CRC where I have come to learn about the CRC's vision, mission, calling, theology, and serving. I commend the CRC's deep heritage of faith but also its willingness to open up to diversity. I appreciate that the CRC wrestles with God as a denomination over difficult topics and issues rather than just taking a dogmatic stance as other denominations do. I admire the CRC's call for justice and mercy locally and around the world. I am thankful for the relational aspect of the CRC, including the emphasis on mentoring and the desire to run this race together.

Christopher Dahl Park



*Name:* Esther Park

*Current Place of Residence:* Aurora,  
Colorado, USA

*Education:*

University of Southern California  
Los Angeles, CA  
B.S. in Health Promotion and  
Disease Prevention Studies, 2008

Biola University  
Talbot School of Theology  
Los Angeles, CA  
M.Div, 2020

Calvin Theological Seminary  
Grand Rapids, MI  
EPMC, 2023

*Internships/ Experience:*

New Gate Church  
Aurora, CO  
Children's Pastor,  
September 2021 - present

Logos Central Chapel  
Aurora, CO  
Children's Pastor,  
August 2020 - August 2021

Sarang Community Church  
Anaheim, CA  
Elem456  
Lead Pastor, Mar 2018 - Aug 2020

*Languages:*

English - fluent; Korean - fluent

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### *Faith Journey*

I would say that my faith started even before I was born. My dad is an ordained minister and my mom is a minister's wife. They raised me up in the Word and I was saved when I was six years old at home during Easter service. I was playing the piano for our family and through the grace of God understood that Jesus died because of me.

As I grew up in both the Presbyterian and CRCNA churches, I began to understand more of who God is as my Father, what Jesus did on the cross for everyone and not just me, and how the Holy Spirit dwells in me. I grew up learning that the Bible was the inspired Word of God which is the only infallible rule for faith and life and reciting the Apostles' Creed. Later in high school, I learned from the Heidelberg Catechism at church.

Through my twenties as I rebelled against my parents and God, I was confronted by my own deep sinfulness that I could do nothing about. As hard as I tried, I could not become any better. As I cried out to God, I felt a weight lifted off and freedom in the Gospel. I was called to ministry in my late twenties. After much prayer and support from my family and community, I decided to go to seminary. There, my theology was set on a firm foundation as I not only grew in my knowledge of God but also in my spirit. I believe that my own spiritual wrestling allows me to relate to those in my congregation well.

As I met my husband Chris and got married, it was very clear to both of us that God had called us as a couple into ministry due to our own family backgrounds and faith journeys. We prayerfully searched for a church who would hire both of us because our desire was not just to have a career at church but to be able to live our lives intertwined in ministry within that same community. Together, we feel called to serve within the Christian Reformed Church of North America.

I am grateful for the rich spiritual history of the Reformers. The creeds and confessions have been crucial in my own spiritual growth and in articulating my faith. I affirm the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed as ecumenical expressions of our faith. I also affirm the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort as historic Reformed expressions of our faith whose doctrines agree with the Word of God. I also recognize the witness of Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony as a current Reformed expression of our faith.

Esther Park

### *Statement of Reason*

As a person who is called to serve God and His people, I deeply desire community and accountability. I do not want to be a lone shepherd doing God's work, nor do I want to fall prey to temptations. I believe that is possible through the CRC denomination to have rich community and personal accountability. I am seeking candidacy in the Christian Reformed Church. I recognized that the CRCNA has thought deeply about these aspects and I value the mentor relationships that ministers can engage in. It is formative to my own growth as a child of God and as a shepherd of those God had entrusted to my care. Furthermore, I am delighted to see the Korean presence within the denomination. As a second-generation Korean-American, it is

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*Statement of Reason (continued)*

vital to me to stay connected to the Korean community. Being a part of the CRCNA adds to the vibrancy of growing in faith while being in touch with my roots. Lastly, I am encouraged to see an integration of word and deed within the denomination. I see faithful ministers loving God's people with truth and love rather than sideline intellectuals or brash action-takers.

Esther Park





*Name:* Blake Phillips

*Current Place of Residence:* South  
Hamilton, Massachusetts

*Education:*

Gordon-Conwell Theological  
Seminary  
South Hamilton, Massachusetts  
M.Div, 2023

Calvin Theological Seminary  
Grand Rapids, Michigan  
EPMC, 2023

Old Dominion University  
Norfolk, Virginia  
BA Philosophy and Religious  
Studies, 2016

*Internships/Experience:*

Resurrection Church  
East Boston, Massachusetts  
Ministry Intern, 2021-2023

InterVarsity Christian Fellowship/  
USA  
Charlottesville and Farmville,  
Virginia  
Campus Staff Minister, 2016-2020

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### *Faith Journey*

I grew up in a Christian family and came to faith at six years old. I asked my mom how to “invite Jesus into my heart” before bed one night and prayed the sinner’s prayer. I genuinely believe I came to Christian faith, but it did not mature beyond a six year old understanding for some time. I had various touch points with God where I cried out to Him in a time of need, but my faith did not grow beyond that. I learned the Bible and Theology at the private Christian school associated with my church, but much of the intellectual knowledge did not transfer to my spiritual maturity. Ten years later at sixteen I had a significant experience with the Lord while reading the baptism of Jesus. I was experiencing a lot of crossroads moments as I came of age. I had a vivid sense that the decisions I was making were setting an important direction for me. I turned to the Bible for answers and read Matthew 3:17, “...this is my Son whom I love and with Him I am well pleased.” Suddenly I realized I am God’s son and He loved me. There was nothing I could do to lose His love and nothing I could do to earn it. This truth was particularly significant since I lost my dad to a plane crash early in life. This truth propelled me into significant purpose and meaning as I realized a call to spiritual leadership among my peers at school and church.

College and a full-time position in parachurch university campus ministry taught me the edges and grooves of my faith. I grew up in a fairly small and sheltered environment so secular state university campuses were challenging for me at first, but I leaned deeper into my faith. I learned how to relate better with others who believed differently than me and understood my own faith better as a result. Namely, God’s work is oftentimes quiet, sudden and percolating under the surface in many areas where I would least expect it. This excited me and drew me to a deeper faith of expecting God to work in my life in the most exciting ways. God delivered me from pride and legalism during my college years and I am thankful for it. As a result, I befriended and interacted with many people I would not have normally spoken to before. My life is better by their presence and bearing witness to their budding faith growing alongside my own.

Today, I continue to follow God into unexpected places and situations. He’s taught me a lot through seminary outside the classroom. In the span of two short years I became a dad to two babies whom I love dearly. This experience alone taught me an even greater depth of God’s love for His children as a Father. As soon as I saw my firstborn’s face I realized afresh when Adam exclaimed “This is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh.” Namely, I understood in greater depth what it meant for someone to bear your image and what it is like for humanity to bear the image of God. He loves us so much He places His likeness on humans. This season of my life is teaching me patience, the depths of my own selfishness and humility all at the same time. I hope to continue learning and anticipate the Lord will use the upcoming season even more for His greater glory and my greater good.

Blake Phillips



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*Statement of Reason*

I am seeking ministerial candidacy with the Christian Reformed Church because I am firmly convinced by the Reformed tradition. The Christian Reformed Church models faith seeking understanding both from within and without. This is a worthwhile denomination to serve as I learn more deeply how the Gospel spreads among every person and every corner of the world for God's glory. I not only hope to serve as a minister of the Word, but also as a Navy chaplain candidate. I am happy to represent the denomination at the ministerial-level and among the Department of Defense. I did not grow up in the Christian Reformed Church, but I have certainly felt welcome since I started seeking ministerial candidacy shortly after I joined a local church. I aim to serve the denomination and the Lord well.

Blake Phillips



*Name:* Erik Pluemer

*Current Place of Residence:* Fort  
Lauderdale, Florida, USA

*Education:*

Florida Atlantic University  
Boca Raton, FL  
BA Communications, 2009

Liberty University  
Lynchburg, VA  
MA Pastoral Counseling, 2012

Liberty University  
Lynchburg, VA  
MDIV Professional Ministry, 2013

Calvin Theological Seminary  
Grand Rapids, MI  
EPMC, 2023

*Internships/ Experience:*

Christ the Rock Community  
Church  
Cooper City FL  
Discipleship Director, 2012-2019

The Source Church  
Miramar FL  
Commissioned Pastor,  
2019 - Present,

*Contact:*

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*Faith Journey*

My faith journey begins in sunny south Florida where I was born and raised in Fort Lauderdale. I grew up in a christian home, and went to church regularly. While I did grow up learning about the bible and hearing the Gospel, it was merely an identification of what religion I would say I belong to, not necessarily having a conviction that Jesus was my Lord and Savior. If you asked me if I was a christian, I would have said yes. Internally I was not sure of what my faith was in. My friend Rick Andrews kept inviting me for a year to a youth bible study in a small church off the property of my high school every week. He was very persistent in inviting me, and I always dismissed him and made excuses why I could not go. In my mind, I knew Jesus and would call myself a Christian. One day I decided to come. Unlike most youth ministries I was used to, I walked into a very small upper room youth group with maybe the max of 10 kids my age, with a youth pastor who was very friendly, approachable, and engaging. There were no lights, stage, microphone, except some great refreshments. The pastor sat us down, and at some point in his bible study he began to share the Gospel in such a way that I had never heard before. It was not that He said anything differently than how I heard it before, but something changed in me in the way I heard it. I realized that I was truly a sinner heading for destruction and punishment because I have been living my own way and against God. But Christ came into this world to save me from my sin by dying on the Cross and he was raised from the dead so that He can claim me as his own by His victory over death and gave me eternal life. I left that meeting with a clear knowing that God would never forsake me, and would always be with me. The only way I know how to explain it is I went into that youth group feeling I was by myself, and I left knowing someone was with me inside of me.

Later on as I grew as a Christian I became quickly involved in serving in the church. I began serving in a ministry serving kids coming from single home moms. Then started serving in a ministry that visited Juvenile detention centers to share the gospel with young adults. I went on a mission trip to Romania to visit an Orphanage. It was there that I had my first calling to be a pastor and knew God was calling me into his ministry. From there I pursued to continue to serve in the church and began to attend Seminary to grow in my knowledge of the Word of God. Later God opened an opportunity for me to serve as a Discipleship Pastor for a church of 1,800+ attendance. This allowed me to gain a ton of pastoral experience and opportunity to bring revitalization to our groups and see the Gospel impact marriages, families, and personal transformation. I learned how to counsel, do hospital visitation, pray for the sick, prepare couples for marriage, help people in recovery, bring people into church membership, begin discipleship, and develop leaders. Soon enough I was invited to join and gain experience to serve as a pastor in a CRCNA church plant in our area called The Source Church. Here I became licensed to preach, and then a year later a call to be a commissioned Pastor, and now on the track to be a Minister of the Word.

One of my passions has been to train and teach God's people to discover the wonder, beauty, and practical aspects of knowing God's Word to live out a fruitful Christian life. Another is to see God's people carry a passion and heart to share the Gospel to the whole world and make disciples in all nations.

Erik Pluemer

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*Statement of Reason*

When I found Christ, I knew there was no option but to serve in God's Kingdom. I am seeking Candidacy because I am always reminded of something Paul wrote to Timothy that has always stuck with me since God called me to be a pastor and it's the verse that says "Here is a trustworthy saying: Whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task" (1 Timothy 3:1). I believe that God is at work in this Aspiration within those whom he calls, and to be a Minister of the Word is an honorable position to serve His people. I do believe that I have this desire both affirmed by my own internal witness of the Holy Spirit, and by those who are around me who also have the Holy Spirit. May God grant the desire in my heart to serve in this position in His church.

Erik Pluemer



*Name:* Ryan Poelman

*Current Place of Residence:* Fort  
Macleod, Alberta, Canada

*Education:*

Dordt College  
Sioux Center, IA  
2005-2008

Calvin Seminary  
Grand Rapids MI  
2019-2023

*Internships:*

Medicine Hat CRC  
Medicine Hat, AB  
May-August 2021

Lethbridge Correctional Centre  
Lethbridge, AB  
May-August 2022

Saskatoon Bethel CRC  
Saskatoon, SK  
January 2023-Present

*Contact:*

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*Faith Journey*

I was blessed to grow up in a Christian family attending a CRC all my life. Being raised in these waters was instrumental for me in the stages that followed. By God's hand I never knew a time outside of the church. God has through the local church provided an environment for my faith to take root and grow.

I attended Dordt College straight out of high school, and this is where I made formative friendships and my faith truly began to solidify. After Dordt I married my wife who has been a tremendous example of humility and living in Christ, as this is when the most pivotal and integral points in my life have been so far. My younger sister died shortly before the birth of our second child, and this was a period of deep grief and pain. However, our God is a gracious God and He is ever at work in us and around us. God brought myself and my wife closer to Him through this time in such a gentle and tremendous way.

This is when I began to be more involved in the life of the church, being involved in such programs as Cadets, Sunday School, Catechism, and Men's Life. I also had the opportunity to serve as a deacon and elder in my local church. God used these opportunities to grow my love for His church. My faith grew here and also as I had the opportunity to see the global church through short-term mission projects in Dominican Republic, Colombia, and Zambia. This continued for 10 years, when I came to another pivotal moment.

During this time, I also worked on our family operated honeybee farm, and moved into a managerial position. Yet, God led me to this point where I realized the farm was not where He intended for me to be. I didn't know exactly where He was calling me, but I knew I had to follow Him.

Over a year of wrestling internally, and having my wife, other family members and friends encourage me and asking questions, I met with my pastor to discuss with him what I was wrestling with. He affirmed that he saw gifts in me and God leading, and so encouraged me to see what doors God will open. I then applied and was accepted to Calvin Theological Seminary, where I am now finishing up my education.

My family has been tremendously supportive during this time. My wife has been by my side every step of the way. It has been a blessing as I have been on this journey to see our family grow, as we have 5 wonderful children. Seeing how God has guided us on journey to seminary and seeking candidacy, we have seen His faithfulness in strengthening and guiding our children as well. Raising kids has highlighted the importance of passing on the faith once delivered to the next generation.

Every step of the way over the years I can see God at work leading me to this point in preparation for pastoral ministry, and He has opened every door along the way. He has brought numerous people in my life to disciple me, to teach and show me what it looks like to be a disciple of Christ, and I pray that I have extended what I have received to others. Lord willing, I pray that I will continue to do so to His glory.

Ryan Poelman

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*Statement of Reason*

It is in obedience to my faithful God that I am seeking candidacy as a Minister of the Word in the CRCNA. I am seeking to obey God in His calling and leading to be His under-shepherd, caring for His sheep in a local congregation. God has inwardly called me and externally affirmed that calling through my mentors, pastors, family, and friends. By His Holy Spirit He has equipped me thus far in this journey. In bringing me on this path, He has shown His faithfulness in leading me places I never imagined myself going. Out my love for Him and Christ's bride, the church, I seek to follow His leading to pastoral ministry.

Ryan Poelman



Name: Jennifer Richards

*Current Place of Residence:* Richmond,  
British Columbia, Canada

*Education:*

York University  
Toronto, ON  
BSc, Psychology, 2006

Nipissing University  
North Bay, ON  
Bachelors of Education, 2007

Regent College  
Vancouver, BC  
Masters of Divinity, 2022

Calvin Theological Seminary  
Grand Rapids, MI  
EPMC, 2023

*Internships:*

Life Church  
Vancouver, BC  
2017-2020

The Tapestry Church  
Richmond, BC  
September 2020 - April 2022

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*Faith Journey*

I look back and see God's hand at work in my entire life and yet a marked event happened in my spiritual journey when I was 11 years old. I was sitting in the Pentecostal church I grew up in one Sunday evening during a baptismal service, hearing someone's testimony, and I realized I didn't have a faith story and suddenly keenly wanted one. That night in bed, with tears running down my cheeks, I committed to following Jesus. I didn't need anyone to lead me through a prayer, for I had heard it many times. At the moment it didn't cross my mind to tell anyone, but years later the topic came up with my mom and she mentioned that she had seen a difference in me at that specific age.

Then as a young teenager I learned the spiritual formation that comes from serving within the Body of Christ. When I was 13 I was given the opportunity to be a storyteller with the children's ministry program in my church and ended up loving the role. I quickly came to the realization that I am most in my element when I have the opportunity to communicate something that could be confusing and complicated and turn it into content that is relatable and engaging.

This formative experience led me to be pursue a degree in Education and decided to leave the western Canadian small town of Abbotsford, BC to pursue studies across the country in Toronto, Ontario. It was in those years in university that I became heavily involved in InterVarsity Christian Fellowship on my campus and I firmly believe the bible studies, conferences, and leadership roles that I experienced in that time has shaped me in ways that is bearing fruit to this day. InterVarsity also gave me one of my first tastes of other Christian faith expressions. My Dad worked at a bible college with the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada in my growing up years and so much of my faith experiences up until that point was within that particular arm of the Christian tradition, but InterVarsity gave me the opportunity to worship, study God's Word, and lead with people from other Christian expressions which I found truly enriched my faith.

After university I began teaching middle school in the suburbs of Toronto, but craved the tall skyscrapers of the city so, while still living in the suburbs, I started attending a small Baptist church-plant in downtown Toronto that intentionally worked to be a faith community for both skeptics and believers. A year later I moved into Toronto and this was the beginning of experiencing the beauty of allowing others to see Jesus in me through being in intentional community together.

One evening, getting out of my car after a church event, I suddenly felt in my spirit that God was calling me into full time ministry. The thought had never crossed my mind before, for I was happy being a teacher and serving as a lay church leader, and I didn't quite know what to do with what I suddenly sensed. A few months later I audited a missional theology class at a local Toronto seminary and loved the learning experience. This led to slowly discerning, several years later, to take a leave of absence from teaching and try one year of seminary. I decided to move out to BC and attend Regent College and at the end of the year I resigned from teaching and entered a Masters program.

In my time at Regent I joined a Vineyard church plant in one of the downtown neighbourhoods of Vancouver where I interned and eventually was a part-time Pastor of Discipleship. I sensed God's confirmation of my calling as I stepped

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*Faith Journey (continued)*

into various ministry endeavours during that time. For example, Vancouver is notorious for its loneliness and so I started a community night at a restaurant down the road from the church and saw it grow substantially. I also had the opportunity to be on the church's preaching team and saw once again the shadows of my 13-year-old self loving communicating God's Word to others.

In 2020 I was sensing my time with the Vineyard church was coming to an end and was finishing off my MDiv at Regent and needed one more ministry internship. Several of my classmates had been hired in the previous years at a local CRC church called The Tapestry and so I reached out to one of their Campus Pastors who had been a Regent classmate of mine. After several discussions, we decided my presence could be a good fit and they agreed to allow me to intern with them. The good fit inclination has held true and I am currently Associate Pastor at the same campus of the same CRC church.

Jennifer Richards

*Statement of Reason*

I am seeking candidacy as a Minister of the Word in the CRCNA as the next step of my pastoral calling. I sense God's calling to care and disciple His flock in the way of Jesus and I see the deep value of stepping into this call through submitting to a specific Christian tradition. As I have grown in my Reformed understanding, I have discerned God's leading into the tradition of the Christian Reformed Church. I see a deep love of God's initiative, God's truth, and God's grace within this denomination that I would be honoured to grow and disciple others within. I desire to minister in the Christian Reformed Church because I see the Reformed lens in which we view the Gospel as faithful to a God who is sovereign overall, to Christ who's most clearly reveals the nature and heart of God, and to the ongoing power of the Holy Spirit deeply at work within the world. As well as I can, I desire to serve God and God's church within the CRC community.

Jennifer Richards





*Name:* Kurtis Ritsema

*Current Place of Residence:* Holland,  
Michigan, USA

*Education:*

Reformed Bible College  
(renamed Kuyper College)  
Grand Rapids, MI  
B.S. in Religion & Theology, 2003

Calvin Theological Seminary  
Grand Rapids, MI  
M.Div., 2023

*Internships/ Experience:*

Park CRC  
Holland, MI  
Youth Pastor  
August 2005 – July 2010

Graafschap CRC  
Holland, MI  
Youth & Connections Pastor  
October 2011 – present

People Helping People  
Pullman, MI  
April 2022 – August 2022

*Languages Spoken:* English

*Contact:*

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### *Faith Journey*

As the son of a pastor in the Christian Reformed Church, I grew up in the church with a foundational belief in the Reformed tradition. I understood who Jesus Christ was as my Lord and Savior from a young age. I attended Christian school through my primary and secondary years, and this is where I began to learn more about how to better love the Lord and love people. I made my public profession of faith as a sophomore in high school and looked for opportunities to serve the church in various volunteer manners – as a youth group teen leader, summer bible camp counselor, participant in S.W.I.M., and as an after-school mentor. While I initially wanted to be an elementary education teacher, through a series of experiences, the Lord led me to Reformed Bible College (presently Kuyper College) to pursue a degree in Religion, Theology and Youth Ministry. Over the past two decades, I have had the wonderful opportunity to serve as a youth director/pastor at four separate churches: South Olive CRC – Holland, MI; First Reformed – Pella, IA; Park CRC – Holland, MI; Graafschap CRC – Holland, MI. Each of these ministries, in their own way, have supported my growth and desire to continue to work for and serve the local church.

My life has been filled with a variety of experiences (ie. death, divorce, relocation, family transitions) that have challenged and grown my understanding of God's omnipotence and omniscience. Despite these experiences throughout my life, I have grown through each of these situations. They have led me to a deeper understanding of who the triune God is, and his plans for me. God the Father has continually shown that he has never left my side, and that nothing will separate me from his love.

My call to attend Calvin Theological Seminary came at a crossroads point when I was working part time at a furniture store, and part time at Graafschap CRC in student ministries. My wife and I had the opportunity to take a trip to Israel, studying under Rev. Ray VanderLaan, and as I walked where Jesus walked, it stirred a deeper passion in me for teaching the Word of God beyond the youth room. I started in the residential program at CTS while continuing my work in ministry, and then switched to distance learning after the birth of my fourth child. My wife was able to transition into part time work, and I then able to expand my role at Graafschap to full time. Over the last eleven years at Graafschap, I have come to learn more about my abilities to lead various groups in the church, how to better hone my skill of preaching the Word, and really value opportunities to connect with people and enfold them into the life and ministries of the church.

The Lord continues to challenge me in my personal walk with him. Now, as a parent of three adult children and one preschool child, I am living in circumstances where my family continually shows me new ways and fresh approaches to see how faithful our great God is. I believe that my family life and experiences will allow me to minister alongside a congregation with a Reformed worldview, and a commitment to the Christian Reformed denomination for years to come. Having spent my entire life in the CRC, I have been blessed with it's rich tradition and truth that is founded upon a God of grace, mercy, and faithfulness. I have grown to appreciate the creeds and confessions upon which we profess and know that my life is meant to testify to these statements and the written Word of the Lord that is the foundation for our lives.

Kurt Ritsema

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*Statement of Reason*

I am seeking ordination in the Christian Reformed Church because I believe that God is calling and equipping me to continue my journey in pastoral ministry. Journeying alongside students has been a tremendous blessing over the past two decades, but now I feel that it is time to partner my experiences and passions with the entire congregation. I love to shepherd students and look forward to providing this same type of intentional care for all members of the church. My love for the Lord, the church body, and his written Word will support my desire and applied gifts to help 'equip and empower the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ' (Eph. 4:12). The ordained calling as a Minister of Word and Sacrament is something that I firmly believe God is calling me toward, and I simply desire to be obedient to this call.

Kurt Ritsema



*Name:* Adam Sculnick

*Current Place of Residence:* Port Saint  
Lucie, Florida, USA

*Education:*

Calvin Theological Seminary  
Masters of Divinity  
Grand Rapids, MI  
2023

*Experience:*

Sunlight Community Church  
Port Saint Lucie, FL

*Contact:*

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### *Faith Journey*

I began my life as a Jewish boy in a nominally religious household. My mother didn't care much for religion and my dad was absent as a result of their divorce when I was 2. My grandparents insisted I have a Bar Mitzvah at 13 which I did, but then promptly renounced my faith as a Jew. I spent the next several years through middle and high school on a faith spectrum as a pagan, an atheist, an agnostic and other variations on deism. I met my wife at 20 years old and we were married a year later without faith as a foundation for our marriage. We gave birth to twins shortly after that and I began a career as a hairdresser.

That career produced in me an ego that was insatiable and resulted in a rise in status within the industry and success that I did not have the character to support. Nearly a decade of time in that pattern resulted in me making several substantially poor life choices while processing the grief of losing a child to miscarriage which caused the shattering of my family. A year went by before those choices came to the surface and the ensuing years involved a breakdown of the family such that my wife and I were not even friends, much less husband and wife, and my now 3 children (the twins and a new born baby girl) were strangers to me. I knew I needed to stop and to make changes but I didn't know where to start. And then the Lord intervened.

I was in a bad rear-end car accident that took from me the ability to do my job well and since my identity was tied up in my job, that was a big deal. Our finances collapsed and I found myself sitting on the kitchen counter one night sobbing. Everyone was asleep and I was up pondering the existential reality of being a failure of a man. And suddenly, as if Christ was sitting right there with me, I knew what I was going to do; I was going to go to church. I told my wife the next morning that I wanted us all to go to church that Sunday and she agreed, explaining that she was going to take the kids and go to church without me because she needed something in her life to get her back on track. It was the first thing we agreed on for our marriage in years.

The sermon was all about me. And it spoke right to my soul. I'm a sinner. I need to be rescued from myself. And that was all it took. I began attending regularly with my family and He began to work in all of our hearts. I surrendered to Christ's Lordship a few months later, and we as a family were baptized shortly after that. I knew from almost the very beginning that I was called to be a pastor. God made clear to me that He was going to restore my marriage, which He has, that He would restore my family, which is continues to do daily, that I was going to be a pastor and serve Him with my life which I am and do, and that I was going to lead a church and lead men and boys back to a loving relationship with the Lord, which I am blessed to see the beginnings of now and look forward to seeing more of as He leads me in the future.

Adam Sculnick

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*Statement of Reason*

All of the shortcomings I had as a young person, all of the failures and the lessons I learned in my early years were all formative, equipping me to be a strong but humble leader to the flock that God will call me to. I know in my heart that I am supposed to be pastor, and I'm thankful everyday for the opportunity to serve our Risen King with my life.

Adam Sculnick



*Name:* Benjamin P. Snoek

*Current Place of Residence:*

Palos Heights, Illinois, USA

*Colleges & Seminaries Attended:*

Columbia International University

Columbia, SC

Ph.D., anticipated 2023

Calvin Theological Seminary

Grand Rapids, MI

EPMC

Indiana Wesleyan University

Marion, IN

B.S., M.A.

*Experience:*

Campus Pastor

Trinity Christian College

Palos Heights, IL

August 2021 – present

Director of University Chapel

Asbury University

Wilmore, KY

August 2020 – August 2021

*Contact:*

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*Faith Journey*

Being baptized and raised in the Christian Reformed Church, I came to know about the Christian faith through spiritual osmosis, but I treated the will of God as subservient to the plan for my life. It was not until my teenage years that I began to realize that God desires to know me, call me, and equip me with gifts for his good purposes. I am growing in grace as the Spirit works to shape my heart to become more like Jesus for the sake of the world that God so loves. I cling to Christ in life and in death, resting in the hope that God guides my life according to his perfect and pleasing will. To maintain that relationship, I am learning to choose to live with joy, gratitude, and humility and to not take myself too seriously—all while submitting to the guiding voice of God. I look forward to wrestling with the calling that God has placed on my life and to discerning how he intends to use me for faithful service in his kingdom. This is merely the beginning of a lifelong journey. I hold certain to the truth that God has called me to equip others for the sacred work of reconciling the world back to God, and I remain humbled that God has invited me into such an amazing journey.

Submitting to the ultimate authority of Scripture, I affirm the core values of the orthodox Christian faith as historically confessed in the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds, along with the interpretations of Reformed doctrine as expressed in the Three Forms of Unity. I believe in the redemptive economy of the Triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—who work to make all things new, restoring humanity back into the image of God. Through the atoning work of the Son and the regenerative work of the Spirit, the will of the Father is realized in the community of God's people.

Benjamin P. Snoek

*Statement of Reason*

I am pursuing ordination as Minister of the Word in the CRCNA as the next “yes” to God’s call in my journey of ministry. At present, I serve as a Commissioned Pastor, in part, as a “bridge” to candidacy. Through my experiences in two campus ministry positions, God has shown me the blessings and fruit of shepherding God’s people in an academic community. As a lifelong member of the Christian Reformed Church, I desire to serve the denomination that has shaped me. I bring a deep care for the life and mission of the CRCNA, along with a commitment to the evangelical, ecumenical, and confessional postures of our Reformed faith.

Benjamin P. Snoek





*Name:* Natasha Specht

*Current Place of Residence:* Spruce  
Grove, Alberta, Canada

*Education:*

Concordia University College  
Edmonton, AB  
B.A, Psychology

Taylor/Kairos Seminary  
Edmonton, AB  
M.Div., 2022

Calvin Theological Seminary  
Grand Rapids, MI  
EPMC, 2023

*Internships:*

Hope Christian Reformed Church  
Stony Plain, AB  
2019-2022

Maranatha CRC  
Edmonton, AB  
2022 – present

*Contact:*

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*Faith Journey*

As I reflect on my faith journey, I realize how growing up in a family that was, and continues to be, a loving Christ centered family was a benefit to me. As a family we participated faithfully in church ministries and activities. We also enjoyed many outdoor adventures together. My love for the community of faith and outdoors continues to be a part of life that I encourage and share with my husband and two daughters.

My Christian faith is central to my worldview, and I am mindful that as a Christian how I approach the secular world needs to be different. My faith has created in me a thoughtful and steady mindset. I recognized this gift most as I journeyed through seminary in the middle of a global pandemic in 2020. It was the Lord who was leading and equipping me for all the changes to our lives during this time. I see how my thoughtful and steady approach to the challenges we faced benefited my church at the time, my family, and my own seminary experience. My trust in the Lord allows me to move forward in confidence. My faith keeps me from becoming paralyzed when some seasons of life seemed to be filled with new challenges. My faith gives me hope and enables me to continue to show God's love to all who I encounter, especially in challenging times.

My very first calling into ministry was participating in leading worship for Hope CRC. At the age of sixteen I was playing piano and selecting music for our Sunday worship services. This lasted until about 2002 when I married my husband. He is a gifted musician, so he filled my role in leading worship, and I began to fill other roles of leadership within the church. It was through my experiences at Hope CRC that I believe help grow my calling into ministry.

Since then, I have moved into other ministry roles that have shaped and equipped me for full time ministry. Currently, as associate pastor, I have the opportunity to lead in youth ministries and preach in an afternoon service that is organised by our Karen members and have a time of worship in their native language of S'gaw Karen. I am invited to preach with the use of a translator. I find this to be a meaningful time of worship together.

My faith journey continues to grow and renew me in ways that I hope reflects more strongly that I am an image bearer of Christ. I have found that my relationship with the Lord encompasses all aspects of my life, inside the faith community as well as outside. What is important to me is that my relationship with the Lord is reflected in every part of my life. My prayer is that because of my relationship with the Lord, he will use me to bring people into closer relationship with Him.

Natasha Specht

*Statement of Reason*

Seeking what the Lord is doing in the community wherever I am and finding ways to participate with Him in his kingdom work is one way I feel closely connected to the Lord. I believe God is active and working in our community and I want to participate with Him in his kingdom work.

Natasha Specht







*Name:* John VanderWindt

*Current Place of Residence:* Peterborough, Ontario, Canada

*Education:*

Calvin College  
Grand Rapids MI  
B.A. Secondary Education, Physical Education and Religion, 1986

Biola University  
La Mirada CA, M.A.  
Christian Apologetics, 2001

Calvin College  
Grand Rapids MI  
M.Ed. Educational Leadership, 2015

Calvin Theological Seminary  
Grand Rapids MI  
EPMC, MDiv equivalency, 2023

*Internship/Experience:*

Living Hope CRC  
Peterborough ON  
Commissioned Pastor  
Sept 2021 - present

*Contact:*

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*Faith Journey*

Each of our lives is a book in which God inscribes our journeys. He forms us, and molds us, and writes our name in the Book of Life. The chapters of my book are part of a greater series, including generations of Christians who have sought God's will for their lives. From my birth, I have been surrounded by family and friends who share a desire to serve Christ. My story is part of a greater story, and yet it is its own story of how God formed me to this place of now being called into pastoral ministry.

From early on, I had a love for Scripture and a desire to understand it at a deeper level. When I was about twelve, Romans 6:23, "*For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord,*" was instrumental in forming the concept of the truth of sin and the grace of God. This began a lifelong desire for a deeper understanding of the truth of God—knowing and understanding Scripture—as well as a desire to extend the grace of God, after being given a life I don't deserve.

This focus on grace and truth was evident during my young adulthood. At the time there was a strong emphasis on doing the right thing, living out the truth. Attending a Christian high school and university, the focus was on a checklist of obedience to God, about truth more than grace. Knowing I wanted to be an educator, in high school I observed teachers, noticing their classroom management styles, but also the value of interpersonal connections—especially with those who were on the fringe. I had experienced this in previous years, and my heart was being molded to have compassion for the hurting. The idea of extending grace was also growing.

Through my years of teaching, first physical education and then religion, my passion for knowing and sharing God's truth continued to grow, and I earned a Masters of Apologetics. In my life experiences I continuously received and sought to extend grace, seeing more clearly the need for both truth and grace. I taught reformed doctrine, within a world religions course, through the lens of extending grace upon a foundation of truth, as students need both.

During my time of teaching, both in California and Ontario, God challenged me to grow in sharing the gospel with others. These conversation with students usually occurred outside of the classroom, often during practice of one of the sports teams I coached. These conversations brought life to my soul. My church began asking me to preach, and I felt God stirring my soul and giving it life. In the past few years, confirmation of the outer calling became more evident as I began to preach more frequently.

God continued writing new chapters as I moved from teaching into administration. Discipleship, formerly referred to as discipline, was my responsibility. This is where the beautiful balance of truth and grace flourished, as we worked toward restorative justice, being accountable and yet remaining part of community. A few years after transitioning to principal, my desire for spiritual formation in myself and in others became the prominent passion of my soul. It was at that point, where God began to write a new chapter, one of pastoral ministry.

God has been faithfully drawing me closer to himself, continually deepening my love for him, his Word and the people he has created. I am humbled to be used by God in his truth and grace with others and look forward to seeing where this next chapter leads. To the author of my life, be all the glory.

John VanderWindt

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*Statement of Reason*

After many years of serving the Lord in ministry through Christian education, I felt God calling me to pastoral ministry. I am seeking candidacy to become a Minister of the Word after serving as a Commissioned Pastor for almost two years. During this time, others confirmed the calling. Believing that calling is a lifelong journey of serving God, receiving ordination is important so I can continue serving the church in many capacities. The Christian Reformed Church has been home for me since birth, and I feel God has called me to continue to serve him through the ministries of the CRC. I value the reformed perspective of the CRC and its desire to be part of God's redemptive story in our culture. I appreciate how all members are encouraged to participate in their own faith formation as well as use their spiritual gifts to support the spiritual growth of those in the church and in their community.

John VanderWindt



*Name:* Jolene D. Veenstra

*Current Place of Residence:* Hamilton,  
Ontario, Canada

*Education:*

McMaster Divinity College  
Hamilton, ON  
M.Div. (Spiritual Care and –  
Counselling Focus), 2023

Calvin Theological Seminary  
Grand Rapids, MI  
E.P.M.C., 2023

*Internships/ Experience:*

Florida International University  
Miami, FL  
B.A. in English Literature 2005

Wilfrid Laurier University  
Waterloo, Ontario  
M.A. in English Literature 2006

St. Joseph's Healthcare,  
Charlton Campus  
Hamilton, ON  
Spiritual Care Learner  
May to August 2022

Mountainview CRC  
Grimsby, ON  
Pastoral Care Intern  
September 2022 to May 2023

St. Joseph's Healthcare, Charlton  
Campus  
Hamilton, ON  
Spiritual Care Learner  
May to August 2023

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### *Faith Journey*

Being raised in a loving and supportive, yet not very religious home, I came to faith around the age of seven at a friend's church after a birthday sleepover party. It was just one Sunday morning, and I was just a child, but I can look back and see the adventure God has led me on since that first act of stepping out into the wide world of faith and following Jesus. My childhood faith was full of mystery, trust, and wonder. I read the Bible and the Chronicles of Narnia and saw my world of faith as just as magical. I worshiped in several churches of several denominations as my family moved a few times between Florida and the Bahamas on our small catamaran.

During my high school and early university years in Florida I wrestled with my faith in the face of the hurt and harm in this world, and I struggled to integrate the realities of school shootings, World Trade Center attacks, war, and famine into the nurturing and loving narrative that I thought I understood about God and his creation. My understanding at that time was that I was stepping back from the faith, taking time to decide what I really thought about God. But with a different vantage point, I now see that our loving God gave me space to explore my faith and come back to him through my struggles. He called me deeper into the complexities of a hurting and broken world, and a God who joins us in our brokenness and even breaks his own precious body for our salvation.

Through this time, God called me into marriage with a gentle and loving soul with whom I had some shared struggles of faith, and also a shared love of stories and adventures. We moved from Florida to Ontario, and I worshiped with the CRC for the first time. As one who had thought deeply about my faith in the midst of brokenness, I was grateful to find in this tradition a body that had also thought deeply about these matters. Waterloo CRC and then Meadowlands Fellowship CRC (both in roughly the same region of Ontario) formed loving communities where my spouse and I came to seek God and to grow in his love and understanding. Our church family would also hold us while God called us through a season of infertility, and then into parenting, and then into special needs parenting. We thank God for ministering to us through the steadfast, loving kindness of his church.

Later in the journey, after working with newcomers to Canada through a refugee committee, I began to feel called into deeper relationship with God's people, somehow. I puzzled and prayed over this seedling of an idea for a few years until I ran into a friend promoting chaplaincy in the CRC who handed me a pamphlet. This launched the formal part of my discernment journey. I attended a chaplaincy conference and felt a deep call into loving service. That summer (with the support of my incredible family) I began part time seminary studies, and a few years later I left work to finish my degree full time (and be more available for my children, who required some flexibility in my schedule). I realized that the love of people that made my heart hurt for the world, the love of story that led me to seek out two literature degrees, and this call into deeper relationship with people were all parts of a story that God was Unfolding.

My time spent in hospital and congregational internships has affirmed an idea that began to grow in seminary. The idea being that if the universe is before our eyes like a beautiful book that makes us ponder the invisible things of God, then the author of creation calls us into a deeper understanding of our

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*Faith Journey (continued)*

own place in that narrative as part of our growing in love and understanding of that dear author. Now, after five years of theological and counseling training, internships, growing into a love for preaching and teaching God's word, and prayerful discernment– he has given me a deep sense of abiding peace and a call to be a companion to others as they wrestle through the stuff of faith, wherever they may be in their story.

Jolene Veenstra

*Statement of Reason*

I am seeking ordination in the Christian Reformed Church of North America out of a call to walk alongside God's people in their struggles. The Bible tells us of our brokenness, our need for salvation, and God's loving provision of that salvation. It also describes the need for the church to love one another well, and to share God's love with the world. It is my hope, God helping me, that when serving in a congregational context I might assist the body of Christ to love one another well in the midst of the struggles of faith and life – and that I might be a peaceful presence and bearer of God's love for those who suffer. I also hope to help God's people find guidance, consolation, patience, and transformation in Scripture – as together we explore the history of salvation as God has unfolded it to the church. In an institutional (medical) chaplaincy context, it is my hope, God helping me, that I might support people spiritually and emotionally in the face of crises and life changing events. Our creeds and confessions locate our tradition in the story of Christianity and define our faith. They speak to our need for Christ's transformative love and redemption in every area of our lives, and of God's sovereignty over our world. They also speak of a God who suffered with and for us, and of how the suffering of our Lord forever transformed our human suffering. It is into this context that I believe God is calling me to serve his people both within and outside of the church.

Jolene Veenstra



*Name:* Peter H. Vos

*Current Place of Residence:* Orland Park,  
Illinois, USA

*Education:*

Trinity Christian College  
Palos Heights, IL  
B.A., Theology, 2020

Westminster Seminary California  
Escondido, CA  
M.Div., 2023

Calvin Theological Seminary  
Grand Rapids, MI  
EPMC, 2023

*Internships:*

Rusk CRC  
Allendale, MI  
June 2021-August 2021

Orland Park CRC  
Orland Park, IL  
June 2022 - August 2022

*Contact:*

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### *Faith Journey*

In a word, ordinary. But not mundane or boring; instead, wonderfully ordinary. By God's grace, I can humbly say that there has never been a day in my life when I did not know him. I was born and raised in a Christian home, with parents and family members who loved God deeply and sought to make him the center of our lives. Because of that conviction, I attended the Christian schools and went to the local Christian Reformed Church. My whole upbringing was filled with family members, church members, teachers, and others who played a part in shaping me as a young Christian man. They dedicated a great deal of time and effort to training me in the way that I should go, and I am grateful for each of them.

When I was in my early teenage years, I began to feel God calling me into ministry. God used two men in particular in my life to spur me on toward a life of ministry: an ordained Bible teacher/golf coach who encouraged me, and a young minister at our church who I began to admire. Looking to those role models, both of whom took me under their wings in various ways, I became more certain that God was calling me to ministry. This came coupled with a deepening love for God's Word. I took all the Bible classes that my school offered and found that the more I studied, the more I loved Scripture and the historic Reformed faith. I continued on that path as I matured, first studying theology in college and then attending Westminster Seminary to complete my M.Div.. In many ways, I think of my own journey as being similar to that of Timothy, who was nurtured in the faith from a young age and called in time to guard the deposit of the Gospel entrusted to him. Through all of these ordinary experiences and people, not the least of whom has been my loving and supportive wife, God has shaped me into who I am today.

As I enter a life of ministry, I look forward to continued growth in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus, and to the privilege of delivering his Word and sacraments to his people regularly. I am delighted to continue on my "ordinary" journey, a wonderful reflection of God's extraordinary covenant faithfulness.

Peter H. Vos

### *Statement of Reason*

I am seeking candidacy and ordination in the Christian Reformed Church because I believe that this is God's will for me. I felt called into ministry early on in my life, which showed up especially in a love for God's Word. As I have pursued this calling in my education and internships, I have found a continued love for the truth of God's Word and a deepening desire to make known the riches of the gospel of Christ contained therein. I look forward to the privilege of doing just that in the denomination that I call home.

Peter H. Vos







*Name:* Marissa Walters

*Education:*

Calvin Theological Seminary  
Grand Rapids, MI  
M.Div., 2021

Kuyper College  
Grand Rapids, MI  
B.S. in Pre-Seminary and Bible &  
Theology, 2016

Calvin University  
Grand Rapids, MI  
2012 - 2013

*Internships/ Experience:*

Granite Springs Church  
Rocklin, CA  
2016-2017

Bridge Street Ministries  
Grand Rapids, MI  
2017-2020

Campus Ministry @  
GVSU/Grand Rapids  
Grand Rapids, MI  
2020 - present

*Contact:*

616-206-2024  
marissa.walters16@gmail.com

*Faith Journey:*

Since before I was born, my parents, grandparents and church family were praying for me—praying for me to come to know and love Jesus and know his love for me. My life is a testimony to those prayers and the goodness and grace of God. While I was born in Grand Rapids, MI, I can say that I was raised in the church. My dad is a pastor in the Christian Reformed Church and my mom is invested in the life and ministry of the church. I was blessed to attend the same church from when I was three years old through my college years and was also blessed to attend Christian schools my whole life. I grew up learning Bible stories, attending Sunday School, catechism, GEMS, and youth group. I loved going to church, but more than that I loved Jesus and wanted others to know and love Jesus.

When I was in third grade everyone wrote a “Young Authors” story that could be about anything. I wrote a story about me telling my neighbor girl, Danielle, about Jesus and how by believing in Jesus you could go to heaven. While my theology at this young age was not fully formed, I am in awe of God’s grace in giving me such a heart for evangelism.

While I wanted all people to know Jesus, I didn’t know many non-Christians and I also wrestled with grace. I remember hearing year after year in Bible class and in Sunday sermons that it is by grace alone through faith in Christ alone that I am saved. While part of my heart received this with joy and gratitude, I still found myself striving to be good and wrestling with shame when I messed up.

I continued to seek to know Jesus through spending time in the Bible and in prayer daily. I started regularly prayer journaling in high school and can testify that in seasons of loneliness, grief and confusion, my Father was always there for me. He would speak to me in intimate and timely ways through his Word and I came to know his voice.

He led me to specific places and individuals on the streets of Grand Rapids during my college years as I would regularly join other college students in advancing God’s Kingdom in the empowerment of his Holy Spirit. I loved stepping out in faith and evangelism.

I graduated from Kuyper College with Pre-Seminary and Bible majors and a Youth Ministry minor and the Lord invited me to step out in faith in a big way by moving to California to intern at a church during my first year of seminary. I served as the middle school youth director and remember feeling completely inadequate on my own and in turn learned to depend on the Holy Spirit for guidance.

After my internship I was led to work with a Christian non-profit organization in Grand Rapids with college-age students. Little did I know that as part of this program I would be blessed to co-lead two two-month long mission trips to India. It was in my time in India where the Lord taught me first the power and value of prayer; being immersed in a totally different culture with a language barrier can make one feel useless. It was also in India where he called me to be an evangelist and gave me the opportunity to share the gospel with countless people. Up until this point, I had just continued using my gifts in discipling students, preaching, and teaching, but it was on a rooftop in India where God showed me just how he had been shaping me all along.

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*Faith Journey (continued)*

Around this same time, I was also blessed to deepen my worldview as a Kingdom worldview through the teaching and preaching at Gold Avenue Church. I came to understand that evangelism wasn't only about personal salvation, but about the proclamation, embodiment and advancement of the Kingdom of God through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

With a call as an evangelist and a deepened understanding of the gospel, it was in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic during my last semester of seminary where the Lord led me to reach out to Campus Ministry at GVSU where he was preparing a place for me. I am amazed by God's goodness and grace throughout my life and how he has continued to reveal Christ to me in order that I might better magnify Christ with my life.

Marissa Walters

*Statement of Reason*

I am seeking candidacy in the Christian Reformed Church because I believe that Jesus is the hope of the world and I believe God is calling me to be a part of proclaiming Christ among the nations using my gifts of evangelism, discipleship and teaching. I want to see and be a part of the world being transformed by the good news of the Kingdom of God. I desire to use my gifts within and through the Christian Reformed Church as that is the denomination that I have called home throughout my whole life.

Marissa Walters



*Name:* Stone (Zhengfei) Wang

*Current place of residence:* Grand Rapids,  
Michigan, USA

*Education:*

Calvin Theological Seminary  
Grand Rapids, MI  
M.Div., 2023

Law School Of Beijing University  
Beijing, China  
PhD, 2010

Renmin University  
Beijing, China  
Masters in International Politics  
and Economics, 1997

Anhui Normal University  
Wuhu, China  
B.A. History, 1992

*Internship/Experience:*

Calvin University  
Grand Rapids, MI  
Bible Study Leader, May 2022

Grand Rapids Chinese Christian  
Church  
Grand Rapids, MI  
Preaching and Liturgy  
2019 to present

South West Community CRC  
Wyoming, MI  
Cross-Cultural Internship, 2020

Plymouth Heights CRC  
Grand Rapids, MI  
Internship, 2019 to 2021

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*Faith Journey*

In the beginning of 2005, being a student of the Law School in Beijing University, I went to the Haidian Three-Self Protestant Church in Beijing. From the end of 2005, I attended the afternoon gathering weekly at 2:00 pm. After constant worshipping for eight to nine months, the Word of God worked in my heart through the mouth of the pastor. On one of the summer vacation Sunday afternoon in 2006, Pastor Chen was preaching on the Scripture verses of Jesus's appearing to his disciples after the resurrection. Due to his little faith, Thomas wouldn't believe until he see the resurrection of Jesus. But "blessed are those who believe in Jesus' resurrection without seeing". Miraculously, by that moment of his preaching, I was moved by the Holy Spirit to believe in Jesus' bodily resurrection and believed also in Jesus as the Son of God and believed in all the miracles Jesus has performed. After my conversion to Christianity in Haidian Three-Self Church, with the introduction of a brother in the Lord, I attended worshipping in Zhongguanchun House Church in Beijing. At one of the night of the November in 2006, I was filled by the Holy Spirit while repenting and have experienced the salvation of my soul. In the Jan of 2007, I was baptized in Zhongguanchun House Church in Beijing.

Zhengfei Wang

*Statement of Reason*

In the year of 2012, I became a part-time preacher in the small house-church nearby Beijing Airport. I served as a preacher there for two years and my ministry in the pulpit made me more zealous for being a minister for the Word of God than ever. In the Jan of 2019, I was admitted as MTS by Calvin Seminary. Since my calling was pasturing the church rather than doing some theological scholarship, I applied for shifting to MDIV and succeeded in the July of 2019. This successful shifting to MDIV made it clearer that It was God's calling for me to be a minister of word. During my studying as MDIV student in Calvin, I engaged in weekly chapel regularly. As senate of student committee, I was active in hosting student prayer meeting. I had also finished my internship in Ply-mouth Heights CRC and cross-culture internship in South-West Community CRC. With the progressing of my MDIV program, I enjoyed my studying in Calvin and became assured of my calling as the minister of word gradually. In the year of 2021 and 2022, my younger daughter had survived from some heart complications successfully. God's grace for my family has also motivated my applying for being ordained in CRC.

Zhengfei Wang





*Name:* Josephine S. Wong

*Current Place of Residence:*

Delta, British Columbia, Canada

*Education:*

University of British Columbia  
Vancouver, BC  
B.A., 1996

Regent College  
Vancouver, BC  
M.Div., 2000

CityU of Seattle  
Vancouver, BC  
M.A., 2015

Calvin Theological Seminary  
Grand Rapids, MI  
EPMC, 2023

*Internships:*

Evangelical Chinese Bible Church  
Burnaby, BC  
September 1997 – April 1999

Union Gospel Mission  
Vancouver BC  
May 2014 – November 2014

*Languages spoken:*

English, Mandarin

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### *Faith Journey*

**Act 1: Adventurous?** Young, little me would have asked, “What’s that?”

Outside of school, my main extracurriculars were music lessons, practicing music, and church on Sundays. Not very adventurous. I was blessed to have grown up in a family that sought to put God and church life first. I remember church being a fun place because that’s where many of my friends were. I loved going to church every Sunday.

Around 12 years old, like hoards of other adolescents coming to age, I wanted to become more self-determining and independent. However, my immaturely developed prefrontal cortex equated adventure with rebellion. Long stories short, I made a few unwise choices. But even then, I was never far from the loving, rescuing reach of God. At 15 years old, at our church’s youth camp, a spiritual reawakening occurred. That same summer, I made a public profession of faith. I grew in my relationship with Jesus as my personal Lord and Savior and felt my heart wanting to soak up things of God like a wet sponge. I started to serve on worship teams, in the youth group, and on leadership teams.

**Act 2: Adventure Calls.** I was 19 years old and leading worship for a college event when I felt the Spirit’s prompting and “the call.” In the years to follow, as I leaned into God’s calling for full-time ministry, I came to experience that life with Jesus was anything but boring. Shortly after completing my MDiv in 2000, the Lord led me overseas to work at an international Christian school as their high school chaplain. There, I experienced church planting, led teams on several international mission trips, developed several curriculums for the Bible department, discipled teens in areas of leadership and worship. There was never a dull moment and I reminiscence on those years with affection and deep gratitude.

In 2009, I returned to Canada to work at my home church to aid in its recovery after having experienced conflict and a split. As I pastored the young adults through this healing, my appetite for more equipping in pastoral counselling began to rumble. Within four years time, the Lord began to satisfy this appetite by opening the doors for me to pursue a counselling degree. As I continued to walk through the doors that God was opening, I was led to Union Gospel Mission, a faith-based, non-profit organization that works with Vancouver’s most impoverished, marginalized, and vulnerable peoples. This is where I have served, as a clinical supervisor, for the last nine years.

**Act 3: Adventures Await.** In 2018, I got connected with Tapestry Nights, a CRC church plant in Richmond, BC. I currently serve on its leadership team as worship committee lead. As I contemplate my faith journey, I write with a sense of anticipation of things to come. I’m leaning into a new season of ministering, leading, preaching, worship leading, and shepherding that embodies ministry experiences from the last three decades. I am drawn to a style of pastoring that is akin to the Shepherd of Psalm 23. I, likewise, desire to be a shepherd that leads the flock, not drives the flock. I seek to nurture, not overwork, the flock. And I am motivated to lead from a place of intentionality and calm, not impulsiveness and hurry. My journey through EPMC has reminded me that I am rooted in a story that is rich in Truth and tradition. Exciting times lie ahead because life with Jesus is anything but boring. With Jesus as my Shepherd, adventure awaits. I’m all in!

Josephine S. Wong

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*Statement of Reason*

I love Jesus. I love the Church. One of the best decisions I made in my life was saying “yes” to God’s call upon my life to enter full-time ministry. Now, thirty years later, I seek ordination as a public profession of my ongoing submission to that initial calling. It is a renewal of my vow to God that I will continue to be obedient to His call to shepherd, equip, lead, and pastor the flock with compassion, creativity, and intentionality. I understand and embrace that “the calling of a minister of the Word is to proclaim, explain, and apply Holy Scripture in order to gather in and equip the members so that the church of Jesus Christ may be built up” (Church Order, Article 11). I intend to do that with humility, courage, and joy. I seek ordination within this larger family of the Christian Reformed Church because it anchors me in a way of engaging with pastoral work not out of my own accord, but alongside others.

Josephine S. Wong